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Zachary Edwards
June 1907.

AVILION

AND OTHER POEMS

AVILION

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

ZACHARY EDWARDS

There eternal summer dwells,
And west-winds, with musky wing,
About the cedarn alleys fling
Nard and Cassia's balmy smells.

MILTON

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AVILION

CANTO I

On the glad morning of the good Saint John,
When mowers, in the meadow, win their hay,
As sext was ended, and, at hour of none,
The bells 'gan chiming in the Minster grey,
Where doth the streamlet in the valley wind,
And the brown lavrock pipe the live-long day,
I went a walking, in a muse of mind,
Impatient of the hydra-headed wrong,
Vexed with the conversation of my kind,
The self-will, the self-seeking of the throng,
That have not tasted of sweet Poesy,
Nor caught of Pentecost the cloven tongue.
God's Spirit moveth in the greenwood free.
His whisper heard is in the reedy mere.
He speaketh in the many-voicéd sea.
If we would listen with attunéd ear,
God is about us. He is very nigh.
Seeing, we see not; hearing, do not hear.
For men are compassed with infirmity,
They cannot read the writing of the skies,
Nor penetrate the veil of mystery,
That all around them and before them lies,
Able the past a little to discern,
The future masked is in a vain disguise.
The world, in truth, is but a funeral urn.
We draw our breath, and, creatures of a day,
To dust and ashes hasten to return,

And men forget us, as they go their way,
When we be gathered to the larger dead,
And leave behind the garment of our clay.
The road we travel did our fathers tread.
We do but follow, where they went before.
Away with doubting thought and coward dread!
For death is nothing but an open door,
That leadeth to the land of fuller light,
Where the sun shineth on a lovelier shore.
We judge not now, nor apprehend, aright;
Our soul, so cabined in corporeal cell,
Can reach not upward to the juster height,
Constrained in dungeon of a clod to dwell;
Our eyes are holden, and but erring see;
Our ear is stopped, and cannot hearken well.
Yet, in our hand, we grasp the golden key,
Which, rightly handled, will unlock the gate,
That giveth access to the long to be,
From the dark entry, where we stand and wait,
In lighted chamber where the feast is spread,
Where sup the spirits of the good and great.
Their toil is over, and their moan is said.
They hunger not, they thirst not, nor feel pain.
From life, the troubled dream, awakenéd,
They wear the laurel, they reward obtain,
And taste the sweetness of an earned repose,
Enfeoffed in freehold of a fair domain.
They pluck from unarmed stalk the thornless rose,
They wander amid fields of asphodel,
In bower of amaranth, at evening close,
They listen to the song of Philomel,
Where fragrant lilies, with the dew-drop wet,
Shake, tremulous, each pendent silver bell;
Where the pale primrose, the shy violet,
And every flower of delicate perfume,
Equal in number to the stars, that fret
Heaven's azure-painted dome, perennial bloom;
No caterpillar maketh them its prey,
Nor bruising hail doth their sweet bud consume.

In the soft light of sempiternal May,
Blossom and fruit are sisters on one bough.
There leaf on tree the live-long year doth stay.
They, children of an ever-present now,
Breathe not our gross but thin Elysian air,
Where Love shall re-unite the broken vow,
And all the mischief he hath wrought repair;
Where parted lovers shall again remeet,
And, myrtle-garlanded on flowing hair,
Hand linked in hand, enjoy communion sweet,
In the fair garden of Avilion,
Where equal spirits them their equals greet.

For, on the morning of the good Saint John,
So sweet a vision, that was more than dream,
My purgéd eyes had grace to look upon,
A revelation, sent from God, I deem,
Of the new life, when shall all shadows flee,
These plausible phenomena, which seem,
And we catch glimpse of inner verity.
Dare then to soar on phantasy sublime;
Ye gentle lovers, listen unto me,
And, all sweet ladies, listen to my rhyme,
If that your eyes are opened, and ye ken
Truth, hidden from the pedants of our time,
To whom the world is but a wild beast's den,
Things infinite who measure by finite,
And bind their Maker down to laws of men.
God is alone Omnipotent in might.
God is alone all-seeing and all-wise.
Alike to Him the darkness and the light.
Not without Him the sparrow falls, or flies.
He numbereth the hairs upon our head,
And the wild raven feedeth when she cries.
Lord is He both of living and of dead.
Nay! but the dead are living, and are nigh.
They crowd us, even at our board and bed.
Of the world's onion the periphery,

In outer rim, doth many peels enfold.
We, for the term of our brief tenancy,
This extern portion, visible, we hold,
And look upon our fellows, and are seen.
But when our body rest beneath the mould,
And when the grass above our grave be green,
The butt and target of the vulgar gaze
No longer, but, as babe, whom mother wean,
To fuller stature grown and adult days,
Each generation, as it pass and die,
Lodge, spirits, in the spiritual place,
Impalpable to touch, or shot of eye,
Each generation, by itself, apart,
As century succeed to century.
No more the church these frequent, or the mart,
Or mingle in the stir of busy men.
Vain is the necromancer's fancied art.
How shall embodied disembodied ken?
The difference betwixt them is too great.
Ne'er may the now rub shoulders with the then.
These look upon a world of older date,
Each in the bound of his own neighbourhood,
The winding river, and the mill-stream spate,
Upland and dale, the known familiar wood,
The gabled manor-house, the village green,
A world unaltered, as it erewhile stood.
I think that nothing that hath ever been
Doth wholly perish and pass all away.
'Tis but transplanted to the dim unseen.
For death and rottenness and slow decay
Dwell in our senses, and our senses lie.
Our eyes are traitors, and their trust betray.
We take the shadow for reality.
We walk in darkness of pretended light.
But who with eye-salve will anoint our eye?
We shall behold, more beautiful and bright,
Our earthly lost we shall behold again;
For the day cometh and the murk of night
Will pass, and to the vision all be plain,

In the fair realm, whereto, with hasting feet,
We speed us, to the land, where gladness reign.
Then, gentle ladies, if ye find it sweet
To be beloved and love, ye lovers fond,
And ye, who sit upon the Muses' seat,
And drink the waters of Pierian pond,
Attend unto the word the poet say,
And pass in spirit to the near beyond.

When sun was high upon Midsummer Day,
And musical the scythe on whetting hone,
When in long swathes the new-mown grasses lay,
When tedious cuckoo, from his elm-tree throne,
That erewhile harbinger of spring, his call
Did iterate, but changed from April tone,
When thrush and blackbird and the finches small,
On every hedgerow, warbled note of glee,
When stirred the grey leaves on the poplar tall,
But motionless the leaf of nobler tree,
I left the bustle of the town behind,
Office and shop, market and hostelry,
To talk with Nature, not with humankind,
Grieved with the babble of the baser throng,
Whose God is pelf, men ignorant and blind,
Who do their Maker and themselves much wrong,
Unversed in wisdom of philosophy,
Insensible to gold of minstrel song.
By pool and shallow, where they murmur by,
The waters of the many-winding stream,
Where ruby-speckled trout in stickle lie,
I loiter. On its back gay lilies gleam.
Its bord is fringed with the forget-me-not,
Starlike, the star of love, so lovers deem.
And sighing reeds, that sway in marshy plot,
Still whisper, as when voluble they told:
Midas hath asses' ears. Midas, we wot,
Hath asses' ears. But, cast in duller mould,
We, children of a more prosaic day,
Cannot interpret, as that Hunchback old—

Our world's so humdrum, and its wit grown grey—
Articulate word, or speech, of lesser thing,
What bird hath uttered, or what beast may say.
That fowl of indefatigable wing,
High overhead, the swallow, seeks in air
Her dainty meat, and to her brood doth bring,
From morn till eve, what in her beak she bear,
Her callow young studious to satisfy,
God-given her instinct of parental care.
In zig-zag flight, the vermeil butterfly,
From flower to flower, doth hoveringly stray,
Emblem to man of immortality,
Child of a grub, that lived its little day,
Then, put in coffin, buried in the ground,
Did reawaken to the gladsome ray.
Through baptism of death rebirth she found,
Psyché, sweet daughter of the vernal hour,
To taste the perfume, wherewith flower is crowned,
To dwell in loveliness of garden bower,
Till the leaf fall, and golden summer pass,
When cometh frost and equinoctial shower.
Great dragonflies, above the tall bent grass,
Flit hither, thither, by the sunlit stream,
Whose depth of waters, as a mirror glass,
Hath imitative flowers and leaves which seem,
An underworld of flowers and leafy trees,
A world as beautiful as poet's dream.
Where the lush grasses overtop my knees,
Are moondaisies, in virginal array,
And buttercups, with golden chalices,
And swarthy soldier-heads, wherewith boys play,
With clover, and the sugared meadow-sweet,
And russet sorrel, that will thirst allay.
But hedgeborn roses to the noonday heat
Their petals open, and in beauty blow,
Whose after berries will be winter meat
To the poor bird, when flakes of crystal snow,
As cakes of manna, light upon the ground,
And frost on pane the traceried landscape show.

With lonely step, along the path I found,
I walked, and entered on an ancient wood.
The merry birds sang madrigals around.
Screamed the harsh jay. The sleepy cushat cooed.
There once, if any truth old legends tell,
The Druid worshipped, and his altar stood.
In the deep heart of that enchanted dell
The Pixie danced, beneath the greenwood tree,
When haunting spirits did in forest dwell,
And Jack-o'-lantern carry torch on lea,
And elfish Oberon and the gay Queen
Together toy, and hear sweet minstrelsy.
Umbrageous arches, with inwoven sheen,
Induce a twilight, at the full of day,
And spread a coolness, that is felt and seen,
The heat to temper of the zenith ray.
Tall pillared arcades open out at side.
In middle foreground is a mossy way.
Fern-fronds it border, and the dainty pride
Of mottled foxgloves, with their warm rich hue,
And the huge burdock leaf, of compass wide,
Spurge, with its acrid milk, and bugloss blue,
And dogwood, and luxuriant eglantine,
And bindweed, that exchange old flower for new,
The graceful clematis, the sweet woodbine,
The hazel, and the bullace, and the sloe,
And elder, from whose blossom we press wine
To comfort us in time of winter snow,
When the winds whistle, but in hall or cot
The faggot blazeth with a Yule-tide lowe.

In middle greenwood is a grass-grown plot,
A fourfold acre and a rood of ground,
A seldom trodden, unfrequented, spot.
The living wall encompasseth it round.
Hollies and hawthorn dot it here and there,
And, by the barrier of the further bound
One single rowan lifteth head in air.
Upon a rock, anigh that rowan tree,

Sitteth, to look upon, a lady fair,
Or princess of the realm of Faërie,
Robed in a summer gown of creamy white,
Trimmed with point lace and rich embroidery.
About her taper waist, her bodice tight
Is belted with a ribbon of wrought gold.
Sylph-like her form, a vision of delight.
Her face half hidden in a gauzy fold,
Through the thin gossamer veil's transparency
Mine eyes the peach bloom of her cheek behold.

She riseth up from 'neath the rowan tree.
The little birds sing carol on the bough,
As o'er the lawn her foot approacheth me.
The little birds sing carol, as I trow,
And the narcissus and the violet
Spring up, and hyacinth, I know not how,
Where'er the print of her small shoe be set.
Bright-plumaged pheasants idly do them preen.
The fearful conies their alarm forget.
Bold squirrels run to meet her on the green.
With dainty step and dignified and slow,
Athwart the sward, she moveth, as a queen.
Her eyes are blue forget-me-nots. The glow
Of sunny gold is in each braided tress.
Soft is her voice and musical and low.
Her cadenced accent is as a caress.
She speaketh, and her words sound chidingly,
Yet mitigateth blame with gentleness.
"I come. The messenger of God am I,"
She saith. "But art thou not in soul afraid?
Who let his talent in a napkin lie,
Him did the Master for his sloth upbraid:
Thou shouldst have ventured it on Change, quoth he,
And risked a loss, a profit to have made.
Hang not thy harp upon the willow tree.
Strike thou the chord. For genius is divine.
The loan he lent God will require of thee.
Yet of thy work the wages shall be thine.

Be strong. Be patient. Put all doubt away.
Though noon be dark, the sun, at eve, will shine."

Then said I: "Lady, but my hairs are grey.
With sorrow, as my bedfellow, I lie.
Am I a harper? Who will hear my lay?
A voice, that in the wilderness doth cry.
How shall I stand against the world alone,
Or win a hearing, if the world deny?
Some reap a harvest, where they have not sown.
Some sow good seed, and therefrom gather tares.
Some ask for bread, and but receive a stone.
Some have no merit, yet are Fortune's heirs.
What boot to murmur? For each back must bear
Its ordered burden. He, who bravely bears,
Doth best show manhood. 'Tis not well to wear
The heart upon the sleeve. But seldom I,
Who breakfasted with grief and sup with care,
Utter complaint. Enough. Better to die.
I cannot reach the mountain from the plain.
The grapes are sour, I cannot leap so high."

"Leave not for that thy labour and thy pain,"
She said; "thou stumblest in a thoroughfare,
Too stony rough, but to the longest lane
Will come a turning. If thou greatly dare,
Thou to the rugged peak of Helicon
Mayst climb, and with the great find foothold there.
Time is the paymaster of work well done.
Men win the prizes, which they ardent crave.
The crown of honour is not lightly won.
Some laurels only ripen on the grave.
Fame may be tardy, but its step is sure.
Some look for glory, where the banners wave.
Some covet, while they live, the golden lure.
Some choose the better part, the poet's bay
Age staleth not, while sun and moon endure.
Oh my soul's brother! ponder well and weigh,
What I, thy spirit's sister and true friend,

Once earthly woman, lodged in house of clay,
With my lips utter. Hearken and perpend!
In the far land, which yet is very near,
Whither the soul doth, at its parting, wend,
Through the dark portal, whence ye shrink in fear,
I, who have turned the leaf of my life's page,
Taste such a gladness, as I knew not here,
Who, now, the daughter of a golden age,
Dwell with the good, the gentle, and the wise,
Co-partner in their glorious heritage.
Our only griefs our older sympathies;
For we be conscious of the loads ye bear,
Your sorrows and your loves, your energies,
Of which, in part, belike, we reason were.
Hence, even in our own felicity,
Your crosses we, participating, share.
I wept the travail of thy soul to see,
How thou dost roll, as Sisyphus, the stone,
Up the steep slope, but it return on thee.
Dear friend, I, cognisant, moaned heavy moan.
Pure hands I lifted, and my prayer I made
To the great God, upon his eterne throne.
And He was gracious to the prayer I prayed.
He doth commission me. By his command
I come, thy guide-star and thy willing aid,
To show to thee the spiritual land.
The scales that hinder, lest thine eyes should see,
Fall off them, at the touch of once-loved hand!
The veil of all concealing mystery
Be lifted, and the keeper of the gate
Unto thy pilgrim foot grant access free!
Bethink thee, thy prerogative how great,
To pass into the holies, and discern,
Embodied soul, our disembodied state;
A traveller that undiscovered bourne
To visit, and with backward step retread
The road, which entered on, hath no return."
Such gracious words the lovely Spirit said,
But speech so halted on my stammering tongue,

I scare could answer, awed with reverent dread :
" Sweet lady, mistress of mine earlier song,
Dear Aurea, shall these weak, imperfect eyes
Behold with vision, that is clear and strong,
Your other world, which our world underlies,
I stand in presence of the gone before,
Ope the sealed book, and loose the knotted ties ?
Much dross is mingled with my precious ore.
My standing corn is foul with darnel weed.
I dare not enter, though ajar the door,
Save me with hand, as little child, thou lead.
Yet, as thy dog, thy bidding I obey.
For my demerit make thy merit plead ! "

She smiled in answer : " If the feet of clay
Are counterbalanced by the bust of gold,
Then God in man the devil doth outweigh.
Oh ! let the past be but a story told.
There is no turning back in Nature's book.
Page after page she sequent doth unfold.
Look not behind, but ever forward look,
Aye doth the river hasten to the sea,
Nor seek again the spring-head of its brook.
That God is just, too difficult a plea.
By his deserving who may pardon win ?
By reason of our weak humanity
Weeds grow the garden of the soul within.
What living man dare arrogantly say,
He hath no consciousness of acted sin ?
God's ear is open to the lips that pray.
His dreadful anger into gentle ruth
Is turned, and mercy will his judgment stay.
The faults and follies of unguarded youth
Are covered with a full indemnity,
If age be lighted with the lamp of truth. "
The fringéd curtain of mine either eye
She touched, and with her fan me lightly fanned.
At her soft touch, unto the world I die,
To reawaken, at her breathed command :

"Perceive," quoth she, "what spirit eyes perceive!
For thee the gulf of the two states be spanned!
Here, visitant an hour, forbear to grieve.
Here, when the labour of the day be done,
Come home to rest, when thy bell sound at eve."
As from the Pisgah, which his foot had won,
The dying Moses looked on Palestine,
From the brown desert, baked with burning sun,
Upon a land of corn and oil and wine,
Valley and hill, and terraced slope and mead,
Where fleecy flock was fed and long-horned kine,
To faithful Abraham given and Abraham's seed,
A garden, planted by the Lord's own hand,
A goodly country, beautiful indeed.
From the rough mountain, o'er the bare, ribbed, sand,
Fair was the prospect, by the seer descried,
The Land of Canaan, the Promised Land.
Fairer the vision she, my gentle guide,
Proposeth to mine eyes of strengthened gaze,
At afternoon of Saint John's Holy-tide.
The hills are gilded with a golden haze.
The birds, in more melodious symphonies,
Hymn psalms of unpremeditated praise.
The blushing rose with the pure lily vies.
Rich earth hath carpet of an unworn green.
Of deeper azure seem the cloudless skies.
As when a limner shall an Arden scene,
With glowing brush, upon his canvas trace,
He will eliminate the poor and mean,
And add a glory to the commonplace,
Not what we see, but what himself he sees,
Retouching all with a refining grace.

Amid the hawthorn and the holly trees,
Fair ladies saunter, robed in rich array,
And courtly gentlemen, by twos and threes,
As in the pageant of an acted play.
They pass and repass, with a life-like mien,
But cast no shadows, as we shaped of clay.

Sceptred and crowned, Victoria, the Queen,
Widow no more, her husband at her side,
Her loved and lost. As ivy she doth lean
On the strong oak, her darling and her pride,
Albert, her Galahad, her blameless knight.
These nevermore shall death again divide.
And Albany, that gentle soul and white,
The sweet flower, ravished in his early bloom,
Borne on the dismal hearse, from life and light,
To the dark chamber of the marble tomb.
Death to the parent did the child restore.
Death to the bride will bring again the groom,
When she, the left, and he, who passed before,
The lover and the loved, together meet,
Beyond the river and the cypress shore,
In flowery meadow, where they kissing greet.
Death must his sceptre in the dust down-lay,
And, erewhile victor, shall endure defeat.
The Master-singer of our modern day,
Came Tennyson. Upon his brow sublime
The laurel wreath, that will not fade away,
Until Eternity succeed to Time;
And Browning, poet of obscurity,
With her, his helpmate, who could sweetly rhyme;
Rossetti—but his saintlier sister, she,
Her lamp who lighted at the coals, which glow
On Heaven's own altar, in her purity
Who seemed an angel in our world of woe,
Not here: she standeth in the Courts Divine,
Pearl among women—fair Jean Ingelow,
Sweet Matthew Arnold, who would gold refine,
And William Morris, who, with careless grace,
Brought gift and offered at the Muses' shrine;
Macaulay, with the trumpet in his Lays;
Aytoun, with pibroch wail and slogan sound;
And gifted Palgrave of a gifted race;
And Lytton, ere the cares of empire drowned
His Owen Meredith, and broke his lyre,
With noble bay his curling locks who bound;

And he, the prophet of the vain desire,
FitzGerald, who with sigh of Omar sighed,
But with himself his Omar did inspire.
Drink and make love, for the grave yawneth wide,
He saith in darkness of his soul's despair :
Where Jamshyd quaffed and gloried in his pride,
Lizards now haunt, and lions make their lair.
What is our life? A caravanserai,
A middle rest-house in a desert bare.
We halt a moment, then we take our way,
We know not whither, nor whence come we know.
We be the chequers, wherewith One doth play,
Moved hither, thither, as the dice he throw.
The wild ass stampeth upon Bahram's grave.
He sleepeth an untroubled sleep below.
Death cometh to the sultan and the slave.
Refill the cup. Smell to the pleasant rose.
Snatch, while ye may, the pleasures that ye crave.

Ah! now the veil is lifted, and he knows.
Within the circuit of the girdling trees,
These turn and return, on the velvet close,
With steps that linger. Intermix with these
Heads of the people, pillars of the State,
He, skilful pilot on tempestuous seas,
First in the council, foremost in debate,
Politic Beaconsfield, with Iddesleigh,
And Salisbury, great amid his fellows great ;
And Argyll, seeker of the mystic key
Of knowledge, hidden from incurious eyes,
Ennobled more than by great ancestry,
He sitteth in the synod of the wise ;
And subtle Gladstone, of the silver tongue,
To whom the people swarmed, as summer flies,
Borne by the current of the stream along,
Swayed by the mob, who thought the mob to sway,
His facile conscience did his soul much wrong.
He walked, self-ignorant, in crooked way.
His good was evil, and his evil good ;

By juggling cheats he was so led astray.
The casuist mingled in his schoolman's blood.
Peace with his ashes! Once his name stood high.
Once, as an oracle of God, he stood,
By men inquired of, till his truth turned lie.
He was a trumpet of uncertain sound,
A wandering star, that darkened in the sky.
Came jaunty Palmerston, for wit renowned,
Who blew not on the horn, ere sword he drew.
This narrow land, within the four seas' bound,
It he made great, and its ill-wishers rue.
The flag, for which our hero, Nelson, died,
Then none dared question on the tossing blue.
Such did I look upon, and more beside,
The stays and anchors of our English State,
Pure gold and tested, by the touchstone tried.
Tedious the task each name to enumerate.
Each, in his habit, as he lived, I knew,
But these I mention, for their lives were great.
For intuition is our knowledge true,
And in the spirit world is no disguise.
We thread the labyrinth with certain clue.
The soul itself is in its essence wise,
If here, but darkly, through a looking-glass,
We look, and imperfection blur our eyes.
They pass, upon the meadow, and repass,
Grouped as the persons of a Watteau scene,
But cast no shadow on the blotted grass.
Yet others enter on the lawny green,
Kings in their aspect, if of vulgar birth,
Of stately bearing, and of pleasant mien,
The savour and the very salt of earth;
'Mid whom the kindly cynic, Thackeray,
And Dickens, mover of our honest mirth.
These sweep the cobwebs of the soul away.
The world is richer for the work they did.
They lit a candle, that shall lighted stay.
Their lamp is not beneath a bushel hid.
They set a table, and a feast they spread,

Whereto we children, and we grown, are bid.
They shall be read, and many times re-read,
Unmatched, unmatchable, in home-spun line,
Since he, the Wizard of the North, lay dead.

Whence trailing creepers with the boughs combine
To form an arch, and bowery passage show,
One steppeth forth into the clear sunshine,
From leafy darkness, whom I, seeing, know,
Mine old companion, my familiar friend.
Ah! taken from me to the crowd below,
A shadow now, he doth with shadows blend.
One ripe in scholarship, too little done,
He died in manhood, by the world unkenned.
From hour of midnight, till the rising sun,
I sate and communed, in his rooms or mine,
With him, full oft, and subtle web we spun
Of high philosophies, and things divine,
Of Paul the teacher, or the Pantheist creed,
And sought new bottles for our newer wine.
The while we sipped, and smoked the fragrant weed,
We wandered in the groves of Academe,
Where broad-browed Plato the discourse did lead,
Or from the Stagyrite we took our theme,
Or phrase we pondered of the Mantuan fine,
Most difficult, where he most simple seem.
But he drew near. I said then: "If't be thine
To hear and answer to the word I say,
Then, prithee, tell, or show by certain sign
To me, who breathe yet and behold the day,
If this I look upon be Samuel Lee,
Oh, prematurely snatched by death away!
How goes it in this other world with thee,
Where now thou'rt denizen? Is't ill or well?
I prithee, speak, if thou mayst speak to me."
Thus he made answer: "Think of heaven and hell,
As very distant. Till the Great Assize,
We souls of men in middle region dwell.
All the beyond is hidden from our eyes,

E'en as from yours. Mayhap, a saintly few
Find, at their death, a present Paradise,
Martyrs in act, whose spirits, through and through,
Are permeated by the ray divine,
Where faith is ended in the fuller view.
Such stand, as priests, within an inner shrine.
They gaze upon their Master, face to face,
Absorbed, as stars are, when the sun doth shine.
Some, proud and stiff necked, walk in erring ways,
And steep the soul in villanies of crime.
These tire God's patience, and outwit his grace,
Till, when they pass the limit of their time,
They fall into the judgment of the Fire,
As shadowed in the parable sublime.
God is not mocked, and dreadful is his ire.
He shall himself interpret, and not we,
Who wrapped in our own ignorance, inquire
Into his secret thought, without a key;
The writing is in cipher, and not plain,
Until himself reveal his mystery.
To some the glories of millennial reign.
Some to the doom of condemnation wend.
But, in the Garden of Delight, we, fain,
Dwell, for the more part, till the Great Year end,
Until the dread trump peal, with boding sound,
And God in Judgment on the world descend;
When the stars fall, and earth no more be found,
But Time is ended in Eternity,
That shoreless ocean, limitless, sans bound.
We, living men, creatures of frailty,
In thought, in action, and in word, offend.
But life doth end not, when the body die.
Yet saith the proverb, by the Preacher penned,
As the tree falleth, it for ever lies.
Ah! but he meant not what the words pretend.
We, the same masquers, in an altered guise,
Play the same parts. We have but put away
Our domino, when the new curtain rise
Upon the next act of the three-act play.

Or, like to villagers, we change our dress,
Don Sunday clothes for clothes of workaday;
These last are folded in the cedar press,
To wear again, at resurrection hour,
Refurbished with a better comeliness.
We hope, we fear; but hope hath greater power.
What we did evil, we may still amend,
And blossom, as the fair white lily flower.
God's grace doth even to the grave extend.
I say the record of my life was fair.
The kind in heart have God himself for friend.
When, sheep or goats, all we be gathered there,
The many millions, who have lived and died,
I trust, I tremble, yet to trust I dare,
I shall not stand upon the left-hand side.
He will say, *Come*, he will not say, *Depart*,
The door is shut, and entered is the bride."

But I said: "In the realm, where thou now art,
How fare ye? Do ye feel hunger, or pain
Of thirst, or weariness, or any smart?
Had ye the power, would ye revive again?
Or is the present better than the past,
And we the fools, our life who cherish fain?"

Laughing he made reply: "Sweet the contrast
Of new and old. Here, neither July heat,
Nor January rime, with chilling blast,
Invades the precincts of our calm retreat.
Here, free from sorrow and from all annoy,
We, self-dependent and the world's élite,
Enjoy such bliss, as demigods enjoy.
Here is fruition daughter of desire,
And here are pleasures, that no longer cloy.
We hunger not, we thirst not, nor we tire,
Nor to the purse-proud need we stoop the knee,
Nor sell our labour for a little hire,
Nor feel the pinch of bitter penury.

Lo! here the poet is the prince's peer,
And here the scholar taketh high degree."

"Thrice happy children of a golden year!"
I cried out. "Who would his long trouble bear,
To sweat with labour, and be sad of cheer,
When his own hand might his own rest prepare?
Oh! if to sleep beneath the grave-yard mould
Doth mean to waken in a world so fair,
Why then let each against himself be bold.
If to depart be better than to stay,
'Twere well the death knell may be quickly knolled."

Sweet Aurea spake then, in reproving way:
"How answer to the Captain of the host?
What to the captain will the soldier say,
If, without bidding, he forsake his post?
Fear, a divine-appointed sentinel,
Lest thou be wanting, and thy credit lost.
Bethink thee brother! Oh! bethink thee well!
Shirk not plain duty for thy coward ease.
The time of quitting will thy sergeant tell,
At such a moment, as he fitting sees.
God ordereth all. Obey thou God's behest.
Men are not lords of their own destinies.
The day for labour, and the night for rest.
Man's work is ended with the set of sun.
Endure a little with a constant breast."

I made such answer to the glorious one:
"Dear Aurea, daughter of the Soul divine,
I would accomplish, ere 'tis night begun.
The task allotted, while to live be mine.
Now staider grey replaceth earlier brown.
The shadows lengthen in the day's decline.
Not without labour men achieve renown,
With weariness of brain and sweat of brow,
And whoso clutcheth at a golden gown
To win one sleeve will credit him enow.

Our whirling fancies are but thoughts that stray,
But, put in action, to reflection bow.
We have no licence to forestall the day.
At a fixed moment, settled in the bond,
The loan God lendeth owe we to repay.
Before the lesson in the book be conned,
To fling the book down were a childish thing.
Is not the present door of the beyond?
Time fleeteth onward, swift on eagle wing.
Yet, for my longing, is the day too long,
Till the glad hour, when after death's sharp sting,
I wake the disembodied host among.
Tears are a mock. Why should the heart rebel?
Oh, change the dirge to joy of nuptial song,
And turn to triumph note the dismal knell!
Make white the garment of funereal hue!
Believe, my friends, it shall be with me well.
Seem the time long? Yet all too short to do
The work I first would in the world have done,
For youth is faded, manhood's years are few,
And honour hardly with much toil is won.
He, who would enter on an arduous quest,
Himself should spare not, and must softness shun."

"The days of man are, at their worst or best,
No longer than a dial's point. One hour,"
Quoth Aurea, "we walk in body drest,
Then wither, as the grass, or meadow flower.
Life is a cup, whereof we take one sip,
Part honey-sweet, part intermingled sour,
And then it passes to the neighbour lip.
What can it matter, in so short a stay,
If we be glad, or held in sorrow's grip?
So soon our bones within the grave to lay.
'Tis but a sleep. We do but lay us down,
To start up, and to find it holiday.
Here good success will each endeavour crown,
And fault and failure be for aye forgot.
Here fickle Fortune will not, envious, frown

Upon our effort, or blow cold and hot.
But in the garden of the soul's delight,
We, that are drawers of the happy lot,
Gather its roses, that are red and white,
And weave them into garlands for our hair,
Where sing the nightingales by day and night,
'Mid all things bright and beautiful and rare,
Where nothing vile can enter or offend,
And Love his old malevolence repair.

"Friend, prithee, now say farewell to thy friend.
Time will not tarry. Thy set task ensue,
Through the back years to their perfected end,
Age after age, past ages to review,
Till borne with Morgan, in her fairy barge,
Thou reach that Island, which the Muses woo,
Where Arthur and his fellows dwell, at large,
In fair Avilion, compassed by the tide,
Whose laughing wavelets lap its pebbly marge."

"Farewell!" I said. And he, "Farewell!" replied.
"Adieu! a brief while. 'Tis a short good-bye.
The gulf betwixt us is not deep nor wide.
For the day passeth, and thine hour is nigh.
The rose of honour, doth it seem to thee
Beset with prickles, or to hang too high?
Fold not the hands. Revive thine energy.
Brace thyself, as an athlete of the mind.
Too difficult is but the coward's plea.
The sweetest kernels lodge in toughest rind.
Do what thou find to do. Who can do more?
Fulfil with diligence thy task assigned.
Then, when the labour, and the sweat, is o'er,
When school be loosed, and thou have leave to play,
Return a victor to this golden shore,
With us a bard of no ephemeral lay.
So shall the laurel, that thy youth began,
In age made perfect, crown those tresses grey."

But Aurea fluttered in her hand her fan.
Poet and prince, the matron and the maid,
Each courtly peer and worthy gentleman,
Evanished, fading as, at dawn, stars fade.
I stood alone, beside my lady fair,
On the green foreskirt of the woodland glade.

CANTO II

THE little birds sit in the leafy trees.
Gaily they carol. They sing roundelay.
Thrice happy, blessed in their lot, are these,
The sons and daughters of an endless day.
They toil not, and they spin not, nor they grieve,
Nor thirst, nor hunger, in your human way.
In a soft light, as of midsummer eve,
Or when, above, the Star of Hesper glows,
They listen to the songs the poets weave.
On beds of lilies sweetly they repose,
And, with deft fingers, for their flowing hair
Twine sprigs of myrtle with the seemly rose.
Nor rain of equinox, nor ruder air
Of winter Boreas, with snow and sleet,
Too roughly visit them, nor pierceth there
The ray of Sirius, with scorching heat.
Leaves turn not yellow, in a sere decay,
Nor the days alter, but themselves repeat.
There Death, the tyrant, doth release his prey.
Chill ague, nor hot fever, come them nigh.
Schooltime is over, they have holiday.
To care and trouble they bid long good-bye.
Their cup of gladness hath no bitter lees.
Light-hearted mirth doth supersede the sigh.
'Mid flowering myrtles, and the bloom of trees,
Lover and his beloved, hand in hand,
They walk, and listen to our melodies,

In verdant meadow, by the wave-kissed strand,
Which apple-blossoms hang, in richness, o'er,
In fair Avilion, the wonder land.
Their griefs are done, their lack and travail sore.
Their heavy burden down, at death, they lay,
No more to part, to differ nevermore,
Reborn, the children of a better day,
The sons and daughters of Eternity,
Thrice happy, blessed in their lot, are they.
The little birds upon the tree-boughs nigh
So carolled. What they sweetly singing said
I could interpret by felt sympathy.
Here Wisdom's book is very hardly read.
There we peruse with spiritual eyes,
And gather knowledge by the heart, not head.

As, in a theatre, the curtain rise,
We late saw lowered on concluded scene;
A new scene openeth, with new surprise.
Fresh forms, fresh faces, throng the crowded green,
An aftermath of the long Georgian age,
Or first-fruits of the young Victorian Queen,
Great characters upon the world's great stage;
Foremost amongst his captains Wellington,
Armipotent in war, in council sage,
Duty, the watchword of his task begun,
Duty the crown of his fulfilment high,
To door of honour doth this path lead on,
Who strive for glory, for a fall they try;
Castlereagh, Canning of the meteor fame,
And Peel, the snapper of the party tie.
Girt with his mariners stout Franklin came,
Who sailed the waters of no summer sea,
Where breathes Aurora, with her breath of flame,
On the murk night, the snow-king's seigniory.
His bones are laid in an unquiet grave.
What matter? Let all earth his tombstone be,
That lion-heart, so gentle and so brave.

His trusty comrades share his winter sleep,
On the bleak shore, or 'neath the frozen wave.
Their death was honour. Little need to weep.
The world's their debtor with acknowledged debt.
Green will their memory for ever keep.
In present joyance they past toil forget.
They look again on a remembered sun,
And smell the perfume of the violet.
They walk the Gardens of Avilion,
And gentle spirits flock around to hear
Their deaths, their deeds heroically done.
Came simple Wordsworth, of the life austere,
Who fetched the Muse from heaven to homelier earth,
To speak a language, meet for plain man's ear.
Came Coleridge, with his pearls of priceless worth,
And Southey, tasker of laborious brain,
By daily travail to bring thought to birth.
De Quincey, though he mingle chaff with grain,
The cadenced sweetness of whose ornate prose
Upon us stealeth, as a music rain.
And Barham, second if he seem to those,
Hall-marked a poet, when he dare to climb,
Much more than jester, though he motley chose,
A careless stringer of too facile rhyme.
Charles Lamb, with his quaint quips and quiddities,
A book to take up at an idle time,
So tender, and so humorously wise,
Whose pleasant wit doth as innocuous play,
As summer lightnings out of summer skies.
Moore, that arch thief, who stole the harp away
Of old Anacreon. Therefrom he drew
Such melodies as match the Teian lay,
Sweet Erin's maids he with such art did woo.
Rogers, and Campbell of unequal line,
Yet his pen drippeth Heliconian dew.
And Byron, whom did Genius seal and sign
His own, and set him with the mightiest.
The cask he broached was of so strong a wine.
Christ grant him pardon, and restore to rest!

I looked upon him, where he walked alone,
The king of poets in his day confessed.
And he, the Master will not him disown,
Whose foot went nearer to the way of God,
Than some, that enter by the wicket shown,
And pace the narrows of the pilgrim road,
Ethereal Shelley, of the Christ-like mind.
His feet a *viâ dolorosa* trod.
Those eyes God open, that before were blind!
Who love his brother cometh near to grace.
The merciful in soul shall mercy find.
His face was beautiful as woman's face.
She kith in spirit, by the ring allied,
Stood by him, daughter of no dullard race,
A lady, worthy to be poet's bride.
These looked upon me, then with foot drew nigh.
He said: "Oh! thou, whom this so lovely guide
Hath led, permitted visitant, to pry
Into the secret of the hidden land,
Forbidden to be seen of common eye.
We hail thee brother of the bardic band,
Not least, nor lowest, and thy claim allow.
Grasp thou the laurel, ready to thy hand.
Fear not. The world will do thee right enow.
If but with patience thou possess thy soul,
Thy foot shall stand upon the mountain brow,
Fame thy name tableth in her golden scroll.
Build here thy mansion of a lasting fee.
The wheel of Fortune doth not all control.
Not chance, but merit, moulds our destiny."
He thus. If sober truth, or compliment,
I cannot tell. Time arbitrate that plea!
Until the veil be from the Temple rent,
Eye may not penetrate the curtained shrine,
Wherein the Urim and the Thummim pent
In inner darkness, mute, return no sign.
This know I, such a word the Spirit said.
If true or false, I skill not to divine.

I spake in answer to the godlike dead:
"Most musical of poets, sweet of song,
Upon the honey of the Muses fed,
Dovelike to float above our sea of wrong,
Who, masculine, didst carry 'neath thy breast
A woman's heart, emotional and strong.
Such inward yearning and divine unrest,
Such tenderness of soul and gall-less hate,
This wine from vintage of thy griefs was pressed.
Who, but the nightingale, shall be thy mate,
To match the limpid clearness of thy lay?
Oh thou, whose love was to thy brother great,
God will forgive thee, where thou went'st astray.
Christ-like thy nature. Christ will intercede.
Love begets love. Pity doth blame outweigh."

"Not Christ, but Calvin and his narrow creed,"
He said, "I hated, and the bigot lie
Of such, as to God's law pay little heed,
But human accidents to God apply.
Man is not God, nor the great God a man.
Terrestrial measures reach not to the sky.
To me the world was but a puzzle plan.
Lost in the deep. Invisible the shore.
In doubt and unbelief my thought began,
Yet less and less, as time my head passed o'er.
I groped in darkness for the better way.
And faith, though clouded, grew in volume more.
Illuminate within with clearer ray,
The light I follow, which true wisdom lend,
And, confident, expect the sun and day."

She, who was sharer of his name: "My friend,
We bid thee welcome. Thy desert we know.
Think, rainy morn will have a fairer end.
Think, 'twill be sunshine, when the sun is low.
Though all seem contrary, be strong of mind.
I, living woman, had my fill of woe.
Here, hunger of the soul is left behind.

A banquet is prepared, a table set.
We sup with gladness, who with sorrow dined.
Within this region, free from earthly fret,
Thy works shall enter and make room for thee,
Where Love, with interest, pay all his debt."

With earnest eyes, I did look inwardly
Into the soul, which gave us Frankenstein,
The youth, who plucked fruit from forbidden tree,
And gathered grape from unpermitted vine,
That stamped his image on so foul a die,
And counterfeited God's with baser sign.
He sinned, and of his sin paid penalty,
Who life and motion to his engine gave,
Inhuman, or of man the parody,
His tyrant, his tormentor, and his slave:
Thought-strayed, and absent in my mind, aware
Of my default, I did indulgence crave:
"Pardon me, visionary form of air,
Spirit, whom fleshly wall no more enfold,
Thy Shelley's comfort, and his tender care,
If roving fancy, by no rein controlled,
Made me to wander. But to talk with ye
Is joy, 'tis joy your faces to behold.
Great thanks I give for your frank courtesy,
Who, with the sweet companion at my side,
Wander amid these scenes of Faërie,
Led by the hand of spiritual guide,
To look about, and, traveller, to view,
Where, after death, I constant shall abide."

But Aurea said: "Ye gentle pair, adieu!
This man may speak, but may not tarry long.
'Tis a far journey, that our feet ensue.
I guide the footsteps of this child of song,
Till reverend Chaucer map us out the way
To vanished Camelot, that city strong,
Whence, in her fairy barge, Morgan-le-fay
Shall thither carry him, where Arthur dwell,
A thousand knights around, and ladies gay."

"Farewell!" I said, and they replied: "Farewell!"
At point of parting, we together stood,
When issued from that side, whence shadows fell,
One with swift steps, a Spirit mild and good,
His earthly years of pilgrimage seemed few,
And melancholy tinged his gayer mood.
"Thou, that the sweet Pierides dost woo,"
He cried, "who from the lips of sylvan Fay
Hast gathered of his woodcraft all he knew,
And walked with Nature underneath the may,
Her skirt hast lifted, and hast peeped below:
I minstrel, erst, of unregarded lay,
Who did my bread upon the waters throw,
Hail thee my brother. Sir, be well content.
In joy he reapeth, who did weeping sow.
This for my mournful epitaph I meant:
His name was writ upon the water. Yea!
But the wave kept the message that I sent,
And bore it onward into lasting day.
The yielding water is made rock of stone,
And the proud blazon is eternal, aye."

I said: "His name, who wrote Endymion,
Shall longer than the Pyramids abide.
Yet for thy death may one make lesser moan.
Who would not die, as Adonais died,
To be bewept in so divine an ode,
As Adonais, who made death his bride?
Frost nipped the bud, that so rare promise showed.
How rich the fulness of thy riper bays,
Had Fate but led thee by a longer road!"

These disappear within the leafy maze.
But others enter, if my tale not tire,
He, chronicler of deeds of feudal days,
Scott, of the high romance and minstrel lyre,
With sweet Jane Austen, with a hundred more,
Upon whose lips had lain the coal of fire.
And he, the bulwark of this sea-girt shore,

The glorious Captain, whose proud spirit passed,
To the last music of the cannon roar,
And soughing murmur of the gathering blast.
He died in his great hour of victory,
That day, his crown of honour, and his last.
He died. No, such as he can never die.
He liveth, and the record of his name
Still pointeth, as a beacon set on high,
To stir the valiant, and the coward shame,
Of deed of duty, simply, nobly, done
To men it speaketh, as with tongue of flame.
Pitt, of an able father abler son,
And Fox, his rival in the long career,
Great were his parts, greater his faults, but none
Freedom so loved, or Britain held more dear;
Sheridan, Burke, Grattan, of Ierne's Isle,
Those lamps of limpid eloquence and clear,
Matchless in speech, and masters of their style;
Not Cicero, not old Demosthenes,
Showed subtler art their Forum to beguile.
Great men, and like to demigods, were these,
The briskest spirits of that strenuous time,
War on the land, and triumph on the seas.

There fell a mist, as of an Eden prime.
The wood it overshadowed and the lea,
Made but a little stay, then rose sublime,
And melted into blue transparency.
The spirit faces I had looked upon
Are vanished. The wood's self seemed changed to me.
In the new light of the reviving sun
Appear new actors in the world's great play,
For wit, or letters, or great deed well done,
Who live in story, children of the day,
Grave Johnson, arbiter of praise or blame,
And simple Goldsmith, of the childlike way,
Loving and lovable, a living name,
His comrades' plaything, and their kindly jest,
Then less, yet he shot bolt with truer aim;

Boswell of souls inquisitive the best,
Of such as open with their pick our mine,
Our private act make public interest,
And cast our pearls before the feet of swine.
He did it for pure love, but they for gain.
Their sin is great. Love doth his pardon sign.
He walked their shadow, by those greater twain,
That, up and down, amid the leafy trees,
Accompanied by their attendant train,
In gladness walk upon the summer leas,
And listen to the wood-dove's cooing sigh,
Or the low murmur of the hiveless bees,
In silence, that, in friends, to speech is nigh,
That interchange of thought, without a word,
Heart meeting heart in love-taught sympathy.
Beneath a young oak, on the tree-clothed bord
Of the green lawn, beside my lady fair,
I stood. Aloft, the wood-lark singing soared.
Browsed, at my very feet, the long-eared hare.
The sound, as of a distant waterfall,
Melodious mingled with the moving air.
The thrush, the linnet, and the song-birds all,
Lilted aloud, in wantonness of glee,
From bush, or tree, their merry madrigal.

I gazed upon the persons of those three;
On Boswell, with the question in his face,
Doglike his eyes, doglike his constancy;
On airy Goldsmith's look of winning grace;
On rugged Johnson, with the granite brow,
Whose antique garb did sturdy limbs encase,
The judge of letters in his day, but now
We somewhat question in our free-er way
His *Ipse dixit*, and appeal allow.
They paused. The shadow, at my feet which lay,
They noted, where, amongst the shadowless,
I stood, a living soul, enwalled in clay,
Amid the mazes of that wilderness,
I with the gentle lady, my sweet guide,

Robed in her own exceeding loveliness.
The Spirits call me. She, the gentle-eyed,
Made signal with her eyes, bidding me go:
"I will rejoin thee by the rowan side."
I, loath to quit her, with short steps and slow,
E'en as a child, to whom his mother's guest
Call, naming him, move toward, yet willing no.
Thus me the Doctor erudite addressed
In his winged words: "Sir, habitant though we
In this our upper sphere, children of rest,
Such matters, as concern humanity,
Are still our interest. Thou wouldst be Bard,
But errest by too much simplicity.
Thy speech is easy, where it should be hard.
Thy lowly wing a sublime flight doth tire.
Their smile the Maids of Helicon award
Only to such, as are baptized of fire.
A lofty subject needs a diction high,
Aspiring thought a sentence that aspire.
Name not spade spade, but tool of husbandry,
Turn stripling into tender juvenile,
Maid into nymph. Eschew vulgarity.
Practise thine hand in labour of the file.
Enrich from Latin root the Saxon phrase.
Enlarge with longer syllables thy style."

But Goldsmith said: "New men and newer ways.
Our age is past, and never to return.
The Muse hath now no padding and no stays,
But in himself the Maker they discern.
Hail, friend! Of this our brotherhood made free,
Be thine the laurel, that we poets earn."

"Sirs," I made answer, "howsoe'er it be,
I know not, whether 'tis a fault or no,
The mavis sings upon the hawthorn tree.
The lark soars upwards, but he stays below.
Each sweetly singeth. If the song be sweet,
How doth it matter at what height it flow?"

We say "Adieu!" We part. With hasting feet,
As doth a nursling seek his nurse's side,
I sped me, where, on rough and rocky seat,
Draped in soft robes, veil-hidden as a bride,
She sate, my Queen, beneath the rowan fair,
As first, at noon, her vision I espied.
All gentle things of forest or of air
Crouch at her feet, or circle round her head.
The rose and lily blossom by her chair.
So sweet a perfume do her garments shed,
My soul is held so prisoned in her net,
I seem as one, who liveth, and was dead.

Before mine eyes pass other, many yet,
Cowper, the sad of heart, of clouded brain:
Ah! but he, living man, paid sorrow's debt,
And now hath gladness; Crabbe, whose rustic strain
Did fit to metre, what he thought in prose,
Of grange, of barton, or of rick of grain;
Gibbon, who told Rome's story to the close,
Begun and ended with a single pen,
Her dissolution and her dying throes,
The stern swift march of the Barbarian men,
Great wars and battles, fought by land and sea,
Ere to-day leaped forth from the womb of then;
And Burns, whose wild notes wander far and free,
The matchless boast of Caledon, her pride,
In hall and cot a cherished memory,
Where doth the shepherd by his sheep abide,
Where doth the farm-maid milk in byre her kine,
Where doth the fisher in his coble ride;
And David Hume, philosopher divine.
Ah! but philosophies have had their day.
How know we? With the pendulum's incline,
Time may restore what it now take away,
Our Modern Science prove as full untrue,
Bear leaf and blossom, then in turn decay.

I heard one harping, from his harp who drew
Sweet burst of music, with no 'prentice hand,
From the close thicket he came forth in view,
A boy, a wonder, who unique doth stand.
He sang of noble war, of kindled fray,
The shock of combat, and the embloodied brand;
Then changed to prelude of a gentler lay;
He sang of Rowley, that old Bristowe priest,
Of the bird singing on the hawthorn spray,
Of spring, from prison of the glebe released,
Of the lawn spangled with the king-cup's gold,
Of the red sunset, or the dawning east.
A very babe in years, in wisdom old,
Upon the threshold of his youth he died,
Who forged his day-dreams in an antique mould,
And wove his web with thread himself supplied.
He walketh crowned with laurel crown on brow.
He wears the laurel his own time denied.
He shineth 'mid the dead as Hesper now,
Whose song was rival to the summer song
The merle or mavis sing on orchard bough.
They crowd him round, the disembodied throng,
And listen to those tones, so silver clear,
Until he cease, and do his harp such wrong,
As make it silent. Then I, standing near,
Speak him: "Oh! marvel, and oh! joy of earth,
Who from thy cradle stepped into thy bier,
To men, unconscious of thy better worth,
Thou didst outpour, a prodigal, thy lay,
Fountain of waters in a land of dearth,
True Poet, in an unpoetic day.
Thy life was clouded, and thy death was ill.
Hope lured thee on, but only to betray.
But now of gladness thou hast here thy fill.
Honour, that shunned thee living, seeks thee dead.
So deep thy root, detraction cannot kill.
But the fair tree, that from thy lowly bed
Had birth, and, watered with our tears, up-grew,
Is spread abroad, and lifteth high its head."

"He that give praise, let him be praiséd too.
For he is worthy," said those lips of gold.
"Thou shalt be numbered with the chosen few,
When thou be laid beneath the grave-yard mould,
And the black Shepherd in his arms thee bear
From earth's bleak common to this safer fold."
Then smiled the spirit of my lady fair,
Above whose head the graceful rowan tree
Spread loving arms—she, from her rocky chair,
Spake, smiling: "Truth is in the lips of three."
"Madam, and sister of my soul," I said,
"I hear, but if the word true prophet be,
I cannot tell, nor with the mighty dead
Venture to claim a proud equality.
How shall I lift, amid these stars, my head,
The sweetest singers of an age gone by?
Enough if lovers, and if ladies, care
To pluck the flowers that in my garden lie."

He passed, a form compact of woven air,
The boy who looked upon the world and died,
So bright of promise, of too quick despair,
'The sleepless soul, who perished in his pride!'
Others step forth on the part vacant scene,
Smollett, Sterne, Fielding, with his manly stride,
And bookish Richardson, of maidlike mien,
With Gay, with Pope, with versatile De Foe,
With Swift, that satirist of edge too keen,
With Thomson, whom the changing Seasons know;
He never kissed the hem of Nature's gown,
But veiled his nescience with solemn show.
He gave to country what he gleaned in town,
Nor walked with farmer in the field of hay.
Some poppies mingle in his laurel crown.

There saw I Wolfe, who died on battle day,
Well satisfied to hear: "The Frenchmen run:"
And Clive, the victor in the glorious fray,

By which an empire, as a prize, was won,
Two stars, the conquerors of east and west,
In realm of setting and of rising sun.

I heard a skirl of bag-pipes, and one, dressed
In antique garb of Caledon, came forth,
With kilt, and fold of tartan plaid on breast,
Begirt by chiefs and gentlemen of worth,
The latest Stuart, for whom many died,
The joy, the darling, of the kindly North.
His port was regal, and his brow of pride
Proclaimed him Captain. The fair white cockade
His bonnet bore. He did not skulking hide,
But staked his life, who for a sceptre played.
Ah! but a thousand lives men gladly gave
For him, and with their blood his ransom paid.
His bones are laid in an Italian grave.
But his free soul, beneath our English sky,
Doth stalk, companioned by the fair and brave,
In greenwood, where the brooklet murmur by,
On breezy moorland, or in sheltered lea,
Where sound the church bells from the steeple nigh.
"Sire, for my fathers bowed to thine the knee,
Uncrowned," quoth I, "yet chrism-anointed King,
What hopes, what fears, were centred all on thee!
How changed the brightness of thine early spring
To stormy manhood and to clouded age,
Till death thy pardon and thy peace did bring!"

"Friend," he made answer, "for I war did wage,
War with myself, war with my destiny.
'Twere charity to skip that fouler page.
Study me rather as in youth was I,
Before the canker spoiled my ripening grain.
If sweet the uses of adversity,
To try and fail, to try and fail again,
Will dash the bravest. Too continuing showers
Make rank the weeds that are the gardener's bane,
But mar the blossoms of his tended flowers.

Of the fair promise of mine opening morn
Think, not of later days and wasted powers."

"We common men, that are but dunghill born,
Sire, what are we? Shall we, presumptuous, dare,"
I said, "to carp at, or to hold in scorn,
Him, eyrie-cradled in his home of air,
And buffeted by winds, that pass us o'er?
The crown of Britain thou hadst right to wear,
Though cast an exile on an alien shore,
And many looked, o'er the blue wave, to thee,
And the white rose, thy badge, in bosom bore."
To him, to whom my sires paid fealty,
I thus. Then, with a smile, he bowed his head.
So passed he forth, under the greenwood tree.
Yea, too, the whole companionship are fled.
I stand alone upon the voided green,
Beside my lady, where the soundless tread
Of spirit feet upon the sward had been.
Out of the silence of the secret wood
I hear the singing of a bird unseen.

Oh! love is pleasant, and to live is good,
In the hot summer, when the days are fine,
To feast, to frolic, to be filled with food,
To feel the blood course through the veins as wine,
When ripe the cherries hang on orchard bough,
And roses ope, and sun on leasowe shine.
Oh! love is sweet, and life is joy enow,
When lads and lasses toss the drying hay,
When maiden blush to hear a true-lovevow,
Be kissed and kiss, and smile her doubt away.
While gold upon the gorse-bush still is seen,
Lover will ask, and lady's lips form yea.

The voice, so heard behind the leafy screen,
Is hushed. I look about, and, grouped anew,
Fresh characters appear, and dot the green:
Locke, holding in his hand dry Wisdom's clue,

And Newton, unto whom an apple's fall
Gave thought, and, thinking, he conclusion drew.
He pierced the bound of empyrean wall,
The stars he numbered, those far points of flame,
In whose comparison our sun is small.
Who called the legions of heaven's host by name,
A child, upon the beach of the great sea,
He gathered shells, and did his ignorance blame.
We, common men, more arrogant than he,
Boast of our knowledge, we who nothing know;
We cannot probe the profound mystery,
Surrounding us, above us, and below.
By harder term, what hard is we define,
And mock the pupil with a verbal show.
Man cannot reach up to the Mind Divine,
Nor view the super-sensuous aright.
We may not measure with an earthly line
Incomprehensible and Infinite.
Our truest grandeur is humility,
To walk by faith, who cannot walk by sight.

With placid Addison, Steele passeth by;
Then Atterbury, quick of wit and vain,
And Bolingbroke, to whom did Fate deny
The plan to perfect which he had in train,
Who, wise as was the wise Achitophel,
Dark policies contrived in subtle brain;
And Halifax, the Trimmer, who trimmed well;
And he, the greatest Captain of his day,
Who did, on tented field, the lilies quell,
Yet, hidden in his laurel, avarice lay,
And, twice a traitor, he turned coat he wore;
Rooke, Shovel, cast on Scilly's rocks away.
In storm and tempest and in cannon roar,
These stood, unmoved, upon the deck of pride,
And far and wide the flag of England bore.

One entered, low of stature, hazel-eyed,
Of woman's beauty with long, dark, curled, hair,

At Killiecrankie for his King who died;
Leal heart and true, he, resolute to dare,
Stooped not, as all his fellows stooped, to shame,
Too pure to breathe a treason-tainted air.
"Oh! knightly soul, whom slanderous tongues defame,"
I said, "and steep in gall of calumny;
Yet cherished still an unforgotten name,
The plaided clansmen love thy memory:
In day of peril, in their hour of need,
They call upon the spirit of Dundee."

"The venom of false tongues I little heed.
Sir," he replied, "base men deem others base.
Firm to my King, and faithful to my creed,
I sought not glory, but to shun disgrace.
Who loyal duty for their watchword take
Must serve their Master and themselves efface.
I died in battle for my Prince's sake.
The hand that fed me, that I fawned upon,
I turned not from it, nor did bargain break,
Nor swear a false oath to the Martyr's son.
I failed. A failing cause hath many foes.
But good success oft gildeth deed ill done."

"Thy stirring life so found a glorious close.
Oh, greatly wronged!" I said, "dauntless and true!
For thou art passed beyond the reach of those,
Who thought to damn thee by the mud they threw.
Last Cavalier! Last of thy loyal race!
The House of Stuart in thy fall fell too.
Thou wast not covetous of power or place,
Nor in thy purse thou didst thine honour hold,
Nor love the dark, nor walk in crooked ways,
A simple soldier, cast in antique mould,
Constant in faith, of unstained loyalty.
Such Froissart chronicled, or Plutarch old."

With music, and with burst of revelry,
Beribboned Cavaliers and ladies fair

Enter, with dancing step, the wood-ringed lea,
Amid his courtiers Charles, the debonnair,
Swarth-visaged, and of aspect saturnine,
And James the Second, and the Seventh, is there,
Last Stuart, in the right-descended line,
To wear the diadem our Edward wears,
Our King, our Basileus, by law divine.
Upon his brow the stamp of graver cares.
Him many hate, yet Evelyn loved him well.
Too much a monk to manage State affairs.
And brilliant Monmouth, such a glamour spell
Who cast upon the vulgar mind; too high
He fixed his look, and by ambition fell.
With careless grace doth Buckingham pass by,
And Wilmot utter jest to staider Hyde,
Here Ormond is, here Pepys, who loved to pry,
There Wren, whose monument as Paul's is wide,
And glorious Dryden, whom the Muses crown,
And Glanville, credulous where witches ride.
That Norwich Doctor, good Sir Thomas Browne,
Learned, wise, sober, in a godless age,
I look upon him, in his earned renown,
Who gathered wisdom from his written page.
And Evelyn, student of the shady grove,
Lover of all things lovely, tranquil, sage,
Whom pitch defiled not, but he pure did move,
In a corrupted Court, and said his say,
And did his task. With fear and reverent love
He served his King, and did his God obey.
The gentle lady, once his loving bride,
Is by him, partner of his longer day.
Hobbes, who did Great Leviathan bestride,
I mark, and other in the world of men
Who played a part, and made a stir, and died.
How catalogue them all with running pen?
It is enough. The task too tedious were.
Men's eyes grow weary with protracted ken.
I turned, and forthwith, being turned, stood there,
Close to my elbow, one before unseen,

A humorous, kind, face, with grizzled hair,
No courtier, in plumed hat, and silken sheen,
Bedizened with fantastic fripperies;
In sober garb, as he were set between
The peasant and the baron, such his guise,
As one who may a gentleman call friend,
And hath enough, but not for vanities.

"Fair Sir, fair Madam, who dost condescend,"
Quoth he, that formalist, in old-used way,
"To guide this traveller, whither he wend,
From realm of other earth and other day,
Through this our habitat, where gladly dwell
We, disencumbered of our load of clay,
I give ye greeting. Sir, I wish thee well.
We know thy studies, and thy worth we know.
But to praise faceward, the plain truth to tell,
Is but to flatter. Friend to friend doth owe
This debt, behind his back his friend to praise.
Let me have leave my tedium to bestow.
The verdant meadow, and the woodland ways,
The moorland, with its gold and purple gleams,
Where secret hope the wily lapwing lays,
Who pee-wit, pee-wit as she flitteth screams,
Thou lovest, and to haunt the valley side,
And trace the courses of the winding streams.
One thing thou lackest. 'Tis a grace denied.
Thou canst not cast an imitative fly,
Where doth the wary trout, in stickle, glide,
Till he be bold the dancing bait to try,
And whisked aloft, be borne through hurrying air,
The captive of thy bow, in creel to lie.
Christ, our great Master and exemplar fair,
Loved the poor fisher. Of that breed he made
His intimates, his inmost thoughts to share.
His chief Apostle, in his hour, he bade:
Go, cast an hook on Galilean wave,
He who to Peter's hand the Keys conveyed.
Yea, greater draught than dying hope dared crave,

Unto the toilers through the long dark night,
Into their net, miraculous, he gave.
Our gentle craft and innocent to slight,
Oh, Sir, 'tis pity. Patience and goodwill
Its practice teacheth. It doth men invite
To contemplative thought, the bosom fill
With sober gladness. That sweet exercise
Doth school the soul, and salve the body's ill."

"'Tis said, Sir, by the wisdom of the wise,
All cannot all things." Such response made I.
"Some love to shoot the pheasant as it flies.
Some stalk the deer upon the mountain high.
Some joy to course the timid, helpless hare.
Some chase the fox with horse and hound and cry.
And some, with flexible joined rod, and snare
Of barbèd hook, go, where the salmon leap,
Or lure the speckled trout with image fair,
And tempt his appetite, till caution sleep.
Give leave, Sir, other men have other ways.
Each, as he will, his holiday let keep.
A boy, thy little book, with its quaint phrase,
Half tempted me to learn thy mystery.
Not every person, so the Latin says,
Can win to Corinth, or with foot draw nigh.
God be my help! I found the proverb true.
With Izaac Walton who but he can vie?"

The Kings, their Court, and all the merry crew,
And he I talk with, vanish now from sight.
A sudden cloud hath overcast the blue.
The warmth is lessened, and impaired the light.
I mused, awhile, upon the pageant fled,
Those fluttering courtiers, and those ladies bright,
Then turned, and to the soul of Aurea said:
"In the dread Judgment of the Final Day,
When God shall judge the living and the dead,
These, with their jest, their laughter, and their play,
How will it be, dear lady, then with these?

Some greatly sinned, and walked in erring way,
Pleased their own lusts, and did their God displease.
I say not all, but many, nay, but most,
Adown the primrose path of wanton ease
Danced gaily, till their soul that river crossed,
That men call death. Will there be grace, or no,
For such, or are their souls for ever lost?"

Sweet Aurea wept, and hung her head full low:
"Dear friend, I know not, no, I cannot tell.
God's love is boundless, as the boundless flow
Of ocean, deeper than the depths of hell,
High as the heavens. He knoweth, yea, he knows.
Leave we that question. To thyself look well,
That thou be ready when thine eyelids close.
God is the Judge of other men, not I,
Not thou. We know but what himself he shows,
And that in parable. We cannot pry
Into his inmost heart, or find a key
To the locked door, although we curious try,
So limited in all our senses we.
But, in his nature, God is infinite.
He knoweth all, and he doth oversee
The seen world and the world beyond your sight.
Bow down thy soul, and make acknowledgment:
Shall not the Judge of all the world do right?"

CANTO III

GROUPED on the lawn, where the cloud-shadow lay,
Were many, whom did plainer vestments gown,
Not silken habit, or rich Court array,
But cloak, but band, but hat of steeple crown,
Formal of aspect, of a grave, staid, mien,
To whom to smile seemed harder than to frown.
There Oliver, and all his house, were seen,
And all his captains: Fairfax of swart face,
But gentle heart, the noblest, as I ween,
Who moved rebellion in those rugged days,
When brother's hand was red with brother's gore,
And men did battle for a word, a phrase.
Hazlerigg, Harry Vane, fanatic sore,
With Edmund Waller, who could sweetly sing,
And Blake, the buttress of our Island shore,
Whose presence could the trust of victory bring,
And mighty Milton, Bard of Epic song,
Who mourned for Lycidas in life's young spring,
And drove wild Comus and his swinish throng
Disorderly from board of moral stage,
Where walked the guarded Maid secure from wrong;
Not poor and blind, as in decrepid age,
But in the fulness of his better day.
Beside him Marvell stood, patriot and sage.

But the cloud lifted, and the glorious ray
Of the blithe sun upon the field shone clear.

These vanish in the wood and pass away.
But, in their stead, walk other, Prince and Peer,
The Royal Martyr, with the proud, calm, face,
Who stooped to death, and felt no coward fear;
Laud, of the frail, worn form and heavenward gaze,
Him not the reverence due to silver hair,
Nor studious learning, nor respect of place,
Shepherd of men, in wise Augustine's chair,
Could shield from bigot hate, but he must die.
Head to the block. The cruel axe make bare.
That goodly branch, though it be lopped and lie,
Shall bear again, and blossom as of yore.
Sweet is the savour of his memory.
And his Church lives. Hell cannot shut that door.
True to his God, and loyal to his King,
Unstained the robe of honour that he wore.
Imperious Strafford, who, with shadowing wing,
Covered the land, a lion in his pride,
A bull, by ban-dogs baited in the ring,
The protomartyr for the Crown who died.
He went to death, as he did think it gain,
As light of heart as who go meet his bride.
And the great Marquis, he who threw the main,
Nor feared his fate, nor his desert was small,
To win or lose, who dared, on tented plain,
To put it to the touch and risk his all,
Meet theme for minstrel with the sounding lyre,
Great in his fortune, greater in his fall.
His death did e'en his enemies admire,
And many wept, and gentle hearts had rue;
Heaven showed its wrath in bolt of levin fire,
And rainy clouds their sable pall o'erdrew,
When passed the spirit of the clear Montrose,
That loyal soldier, chivalrous and true.
Now, in the land of his serene repose,
He reapeth harvest, that he sowed before.
Illusive life and all its fleeting shows
For him are ended. He hath grief no more.
But, held in honour by the glorious dead,

The bord he treadeth of Avilion shore.
Then Falkland, of the spotless soul, who fled
From civil discord and a world of ill,
Borne on men's shoulders, laid in seemly bed,
Upon the slope of that ensanguined hill.
Peace, peace, he murmured, and he now hath peace.
The storm is over, and the wind is still.
And fiery Rupert, whom the broil did please,
And shock of squadrons, and wild battle cry;
And Maurice, whelmed beneath West Indian seas;
And he, that pattern of old chivalry,
Sir Bevis, Captain of the loyal West,
Who died, as should a gallant Grenville die;
And he, the Soldier Poet, he who best
His honour loved, yet loved his lady well,
Poor, and a prisoner, his dauntless breast
Made light of iron bars and grated cell.
Stone walls, he said, *cannot the soul encage,*
Wherein minds innocent and quiet dwell.
This Gate-house chamber is my hermitage,
Free as the little birds in air that fly,
Love greeteth me with such kind embassage.

Lucasta's shade drew to her lover nigh.
They turned, and did together come toward me,
Where, underneath the leafy canopy,
I stood, with Aurea, by the rowan tree.
With kindly speech they give me greeting fair:
"Sir, that hast seisin of Parnassian fee,
For whom her laurel doth the Muse prepare,
Great is our joy thy visage to behold.
Poet and lover, each in each hath share.
The new is daughter of a vanished old.
Oh! not in envy, but sincere delight,
Though some be writ in silver, some in gold,
The dimmer star doth apprehend the bright,
And bask in radiance of a fuller ray,
Although, eclipsed itself, it pale from sight."

Words of such graciousness those Spirits say.
But I make answer: "Nay, what men are we,
Who, born the children of a prose-spun day,
Lead common lives in dull security!
Though I be brother to the sacred Nine,
I speak but as a fool—pray, pardon me—
And touch the harp with surer hand than thine:
Yes! if with Orpheus on the lute I vie:
My name would live but in the written line.
Words are not deeds. Thou didst live Poesy.
Thy life a greater Poem than thy song,
And honour in thy grave doth buried lie."

These pass, and mingle with the neighbour throng.
Then entered Digby, that fantastic wight,
Whose wayward fancy did his wit some wrong,
Who salved the barb, and did the lesion slight;
And learned Napier, of the weary sine,
And cosine, that with me came never right.
Pythagoras deemed Numbers were divine.
Alas! but no Pythagoras am I,
And Mathematics are not in my line.
Came princely Villiers, he who climbed so high,
Loved by two Kings, and darling of a Queen,
By dagger of assassin doomed to die.
Gracious his look and dignified his mien;
Cut off, in the full blossom of his pride,
When his sap flourished, and his leaf was green.
Then royal James, his shrewder thought allied
To folly, yet his folly near to sense;
An easy goodman, who could homestead guide,
And laws to servant man and lass dispense.
The cares of kingship were too great a care.
His fief contained within too large a fence.
Unmeet the burden of his times to bear,
A learned pedant, for his words were wise,
He sowed much sorrow for his coming heir.

One, born to greatness, which she did not prize,
Clapped into cage, to flutter with hurt wing,
Poor, silly, bird, until she mopes and dies,
Divorced from love, yet she wore wedding-ring,
Sweet Arabella Stuart I did see,
Unwitting rival of too jealous king.
Where stood we twain, beneath the rowan tree,
I, robed in flesh, and the dear spirit guide,
She, with the ladies of her company,
Lightly drew near, when she mine Aurea spied.
Smiling she spake: "Vision of loveliness,
For wert thou set by Cytherea's side,
She would seem wanting, and her name be less,
I give thee greeting for thy beauty's sake."
She said, and folded her in soft caress.

But, with a blush and smile, sweet Aurea spake:
"Dear Madam, daughter of a royal line,
It is not meet such compliment to make.
The beauty that I have God made it mine.
To him be praise. He did make women fair
To fill the lover's heart with thought divine.
His mirror, upon earth, fair women are.
Hence men are stirred to deed of chivalry.
For us doth poet sing and soldier dare.
I know not what within of Heaven have we.
True love points upward. 'Tis not gross nor low,
From carnal appetite and loose thought free."

Then asked a lady: "Have we leave to know,
Whither ye wend on unaccustomed way?
That this man liveth doth his shadow show.
He cometh visitant from other day.
Friends, if ye care your errand to disclose,
Our eager ear will treasure what ye say."

Aurea made answer: "Sisters, I suppose,
The world to this man put on winter face.
His day was darkness. Love divine me chose,
God thought him worthy to receive such grace,

Through the dark valley to become his guide,
And lead him hither to the secret place,
Wherein we, disembodied souls, reside,
In gladness, in the Garden of the blest,
Where Love is king, and summer doth abide;
A bird of passage, transitory guest,
To mingle with the great of other time,
To look, awhile, upon his future rest,
And take the measurement of this our clime.
Know, when he die, he shall not all be dead,
Embalmed in sweetness of remembered rhyme.
The veil is lifted, ere his breath be fled,
For him. The gate back, on its hinge, hath rolled,
That he, with living foot, Time's path re-tread,
And commune, late-born, with your centuries old.
Then, gentle sisters, wish ye this man well,
By whom our tale shall to the world be told."

"Sir, thy name prosper, and be sweet of smell,"
Said all those ladies. Then they smiled adieu!
And vanished into depth of bosky dell.
Yes, all that goodly company from view
Are passed, both king, and earl, and courtier gay.
One other cometh into sight anew.
I look upon him in bewildered way,
And marvel if mine eyes behold aright
That arch-conspirator, whom Heaven did stay,
Who would a Parliament in death unite—
Catesby, whose brooding mind devised a blow
Sheep-dog and shepherd in one hour to smite.
True to his Faith, yet that Faith's deadliest foe.
God be his judge, the Judge who judgeth all.
For nothing private was his aim, or low.
A gentleman to look at, straight-limbed, tall,
I saw him, personable man, God wot.
No coward. Sword in hand, at Holbeach Hall,
Face to the foe, he died by sudden shot.
He staked, and loser he paid penalty,
Prime mover in a memorable plot.

Brief word he speaketh, and with deep-drawn sigh :
" Sir, hatest me for thing I would have done ? "
" No, pity-drowned is hatred," I reply.
" For, Sir, the blood, in modern veins, doth run
More equable, nor pulseth now, as then,
When thou, with living eyes, beheldst our sun.
Yet, oh ! 'tis fault to slay our fellow men,
Because they differ, in a point of creed,
About a matter which we neither ken.
We should show mercy, we who mercy need.
Who draw the sword shall perish by the sword.
So God hath said, and thou didst find it deed."
He maketh answer with excusing word :
" Then, verily, to me mine act seemed right,
Which now I know of Earth and Heaven abhorred.
Who serve his God, though he have little light,
God will forgive him, though he serve amiss.
No selfish object did my zeal incite.
Christ's Holy Church, and Peter's Chair, I wis,
Did move my passion, and direct mine aim.
He who betrayed us with a Judas kiss,
The double traitor, load him more with shame ! "
With step that hasted, and uneven pace,
So passed he, conscious of an inward blame.

Enter a laughing troop of elves and fays.
And, hand in hand, they caper round the green,
One singeth, one upon the cithern plays.
" England was merry England once, I ween,
When lad and lass danced round the Maypole tree,
When every village chose its Mayday queen,
When maids went maying in the greenwood free,
When every Jack brought fairing home to Jill,
And Jill was kind, nor any harm did see ;
When corn was ground in every manor mill,
And every cottage had its spinning-wheel ;
When every good-wife brewed strong ale at will,
And baked her brown loaf out of wholesome meal ;
When trade was good, and rent and taxes low,

When Sheffield blades were forged of truer steel;
Ere noisy gun supplanted earlier bow,
But, at the butts, they practised archery.
England was merry England long ago.
Each man content was with his own degree,
Or e'er the poor became the rich man's ape,
Or clown pretended to gentility."

These tiny things of Liliputian shape
So dance before me, clad in Lincoln green,
Whose comely limbs or hose and doublet drape,
Or gown and petticoat of cobweb sheen.
They flit. Appear upon the voided stage,
With great Elizabeth, the glorious Queen,
The greatest men of Britain's greatest age,
The merchant prince, the ruffling cavalier,
Seaman and soldier, statesman, poet, sage;
Walsingham, Burleigh of the nod severe,
Grave Bacon, that philosopher profound,
Who brought down wisdom from celestial sphere
To have its roots within our common ground;
Impetuous Essex; Leicester, proud and vain,
Whose thoughts were fixed upon the golden round;
The gallant sea-dogs who made war with Spain,
Raleigh, Drake, Hawkins, Frobisher, that died
Of honourable wound, in battle ta'en;
These, in their shallow brigantines, defied
The tower-high galleons and Armada might;
These broke the power of Philip and his pride;
The poet-soldier, slain in glorious fight,
At Zutphen, he who told of Arcadie,
Too little read, a storehouse of delight,
Full of sweet thoughts and noble subtilty;
Straws float upon the surface of the stream,
Pearls sink beneath, nor men their merit see:
Nigh to whom Lyly, skimmer of the cream
Of dainty fancies, if too picked and nice,
No pedant, moralist of noble theme.
He to rough English lent a courtlier guise.

His wish is given, in cabinet to lie
Of scholar, unperused by vulgar eyes.

Then Mary Stuart entered, and passed by,
More sinned against or sinning? Who shall say?
So fair, and of such sweet benignity,
I did acquit her. Born in evil day,
She supped her fill of sorrow, and her head
Upon the block did as a pillow lay.
She went to death as who doth go to bed.
Around her throng the loyal hearts and true,
Who loved her living, and who serve her dead.

To my dear lady, with soft eyes of blue,
And coronet of braided golden hair,
I turn: "Sweet Madam, he first breath who drew
At Stratford-upon-Avon, Maker rare,
The Master of his craft, the peerless one,
Whose bones are laid within the chancel fair,
Where Avon waters by the graveyard run,
My sister, are mine earth-dimmed eyes too blear
To recognise the Muses' darling son?
Or is it, that he dwell in light more clear,
Spectator of the parts we Players play,
From unapproachéd height we draw not near?"

My lady saith: "As we together stray,
Sweet friend, through region to the soul assigned,
Dost not thou notice how each keep his day?
How kind commingle but with cognate kind?
We have our limit and environment—
The world of spirits has its laws that bind—
Though not in prison of the body pent.
I had not parted from my company,
Wer't not, on thy behoof, on errand sent.
Such favour, of His grace, God showeth thee.
He did appoint me to become thy guide,
And put into my hand a master key,
That every door to thee stand open wide.

Like seeketh like. But Shakespeare hath no peer.
His mighty soul by no constraint is tied.
Free to set foot in every varied sphere,
To triumph o'er the bars of time and space,
His proper seat is neither there nor here.
Doubt not. Thou shalt behold him, face to face,
By this white hand, before an hour go by.
His present haunt is in a neighbour place."

My lady turned, and her foot daintily
Traversed the velvet of the woodland way.
I follow, noting with a careless eye,
Where little foxcubs by the vixen play,
Nor heed our presence; the shy fallow deer
I mark, and listen to the song-birds gay;
And gaze on Aurea, filled with reverent fear,
Abashed, as servant, who his queen espies
With chastened look, lest he too bold appear.
Laughing she said: "Our women's souls despise
Who serveth, but a master, pleased, obey.
Unto the strong the beautiful is prize.
Herself she loveth at his feet to lay.
Not to be waited on, rather to wait
Upon our lord, we think the better way."

I said: "But, Madam, if the worth be great,
Man needs must worship. Gold and silver fine
Are put to nobler use, commensurate
With their high value. From a meaner mine
We draw base metals, meet for baser use,
That are not hall-marked with the lion sign.
He who the gentle and the holy woos,
His own desert is, in his eyes, too small
To tie the latchet of his lady's shoes,
In her comparison as none at all.
For perfect womanhood is so divine,
Call it Madonna, thou wilt not miscall."

But she: "We women are but moons that shine
With light reflected from a fuller sun.

In us the graces of the weak combine.
In measured orbit, well content, we run.
The wise think glory to submit to sway,
And her but foolish who will yield to none."

So, softly smiling, she did end her say.
And I was silent. The light filtered clear
Through the brown tree-trunks and the verdant spray,
From the wood's end, for the wood's end was near.
The trees, in semicircle, curved around
A flat-topped meadow. After, tier on tier,
Were terraced slopes. By many zigzags wound
A falling footpath to the valley low,
Where the fair river, which again I found,
Vaguely moved seaward in meandering flow.
In part did osier beds the waters hide,
That else were lit up with a silver glow.

Where the path issued from the woodland side,
Lithe honeysuckle tendrils, full of flower,
With clematis, and with the blushing pride
Of the sweet wild rose, form a matted bower,
A shade to shelter from the noonday heat,
Or roof sufficient for a summer shower.
Here, imitative Nature fixed a seat,
Or rustic Art had put on Nature's guise,
Or was it all a mere illusive cheat,
The trick of glamour, to beguile mine eyes.
There he of Avon, there, less full in sight,
Sate Spenser, as who not with Shakespeare vies.
Yet sweet is Una with her Red Cross Knight,
And rich and fanciful the varied phrase.
Taught by the Muse in parable to write,
Of Fairyland he doth describe the ways,
And show how Virtue triumph over Vice;
Yet, tedious, on his theme o'erlong he stays,
And in his diction is too picked and nice.
He sat by Shakespeare. Then my lady spake:
"Yonder is he, the pearl beyond all price,

Who bade the Drama be reborn, and wake,
The Tragic and the Comic Muse between.
View him, the Maker, who so well could make,
And set to laughter, and to tears, his scene.
He did the buskin and the sock combine.
He widely gathered, and did wisely glean."

Great Shakespeare saw, and gave a beckoning sign.
"Cousin, come near," his voice benignant said.
I did uncover to the bard divine,
And vailed the bonnet I had worn on head.
Him I drew near with reverential mien,
And trod as one who doth in Temple tread.
Stand round about him Massinger and Greene,
Beaumont and Fletcher, those twin stars that shine,
With rare Ben Jonson, of a wit more keen,
And turgid Marlowe of the mighty line,
Deemed once the rivals of his living day,
Yet theirs was vintage of a sourer wine.
Then asked he question: "What about me say
Thy living fellows? Doth my fashion spread?
Are Players wont my characters to play?
And, in the closet, am I thumbed and read?
For, to and fro, the pendulum of Fame
Aye swingeth. Oft the foot is o'er the head.
Our Lady Fortune's but a fickle dame.
Men chide to-morrow what to-day they praise.
They yesterday extolled what now they blame."

"To Stratford-upon-Avon lead all ways,"
I said. "Thy proud name is a beacon light.
Men, in the closet, study well thy Plays,
And groweth, as they feed, their appetite.
But when enacted on the public stage,
Our zeal is rather that we dress thee right.
Mere tricks and trappings all our minds engage,
Unto the scandal of the spoken line.
To gratify the fool we grieve the sage.
We choke the poet, when we robe him fine.

Even in this our advertising day,
No bush is needed for so good a wine.
Sir, for the shell to cast the pearl away
Is but to copy thy poor Indian's part.
But to the wise thy work is joy for aye.
Some will, by cavilling, show Critic art.
They shake their heads. *The sun hath spots*, they cry.
Their wares these carry to no gainful mart,
Impertinents—but they bear beam in eye.
Others, mere Bedlamites broke loose, declare,
Thy pen, Sir, never penned a tragedy;
The grazier's son is not the Muses' heir;
He could not construe, he could poorly scan,
Of classic learning he had starveling share;
He stole the labours of another man.
The Lord of Verulam—their proof's but weak.
"Let such accept it as accept it can—
Well versed in Latin, and with store of Greek,
Did all. Haphazard letters from a row
Culling, they forge what, credulous, they seek."

He smiled: "But thinketh any poet so?"
"No, Sir," I said, "for poets' eyes see true.
Men's limitations and their powers they know,
And what one can and what he cannot do.
We know how Bacon could not wield thy pen,
For ye were diverse as the poles, ye two.
And thou hadst thoughts beyond his utmost ken,
And sympathies, in which he had no share.
To join in union two such unlike men,
To cover with one hat such dual pair,
This were a miracle almost too great
For Heaven, and Heaven its miracles doth spare."

"What doth it matter? We have conquered Fate.
Enough," he saith, "that we be widely read.
Bacon or Shakespeare, let their tongues debate,
So they draw water from our fountain-head.
The name's a nothing. Called by other name,

No less a fragrance the sweet rose would shed.
The building of the Pyramid's the same,
Though Cheops, or he second title take,
Who reared it, his memorial of fame."

The sitter on the bench beside him spake:
"My Lord and brother, 'tis Midsummer Day.
Such favour show, for this sweet lady's sake—
Doth, gentle friends, your business brook delay—
Or, for my love, these wayfarers invite
To view the spirits of past Actors play
Thy youthful Dream of a Midsummer Night.
Ever, great Sir, at this accustomed hour,
They pay this homage. 'Tis their charter right."

He finger shook: "Him the wild wolf devour,
Who steal the word I had in mind to say!
Cousins, deem yours this honeysuckle bower.
Here sit. Let business sleep. Ye shall survey
A Play of Shakespeare, as it should be played,
By perfect Actors, in a perfect way."

Large room upon their ivied bench they made,
And gave, the Glorious Ones, to share their seat,
Which did the trailing clematis o'ershade.
Roses and woodbine spanned the ceiling neat.
These showed me such a noble courtesy.
Ah! not for me, but for my lady sweet.
I know not how, upon the greensward nigh,
A royal palace, semblable, doth rise,
With tower, and pinnacle, and flag-staff high,
And vaulted hall, and long arched galleries.
There doth the Duke of Athens hold his state.
By him the Maiden, shorn of warlike guise,
Whom he with sword-point wooed. Them Philostrate,
His Master of the Revels, doth attend.
Courtiers around, and lovely pages, wait.
He Philostrate doth upon errand send,
Who maketh exit. Enter, at their cue,

The tyrant sire, who would his daughter bend
To change her old love for a lover new,
Hermia, the fair, and Hermia's suitors twain.
Poor maid, she weepeth, and her heart hath rue,
Condemned to marry with a hated swain,
Or joys of wifehood, all her days, forego,
A Vestal of the Moon, the sweet, glad, pain
Of divine motherhood never to know ;
To chill the current of her quick, warm, blood,
And stay her youthful heat with winter snow,
A pale-faced nun in Dian's sisterhood.
So doth the inexorable Judge decide.
So then the stern, harsh, law of Athens stood.
Exeunt the rest. The lovers twain abide,
And nourish in their heart rebellious thought,
Then entered one, for other cause who sighed,
Fair Helena, who, seeking, is unsought.
Unto whom, as to a sister, they disclose
Their plot. She, lovesick, and of mind distraught,
Will haste to tell Demetrius all she knows.
Then, one by one, they several exit made.
Then fell the Drop Scene. Then again it rose.

Where Peter Quince, a carpenter by trade,
Keep house. The City crafts assemble there,
Poor men, with roughened hands, which toils abrade.
Their piece they choose. The characters they share,
To grace the wedding eve festivities,
Ere Theseus bed Hippolita the fair.

Endeth Act First, and, shifted in a trice,
In a fair glade, in a fair forest nigh
To the Cecropian town, the new scene lies.
Thither Lysander did with Hermia fly.
But lost they wander. And the night is late.
Fulfilled is all the wood of Faërie.
Demetrius speedeth, in his jealous hate,
Their track, in trackless forest, to pursue,
Upon his steps the steps of Helen wait.

She, timid maid, who should be wooed, must woo.
He checketh her with much discourtesy,
Unknightly soul, to gentilhood untrue.
But, sirs and ladies, for ye know, as I,
The story, shall I Shakespeare dare redrape ?
Imagine in her sleep Titania lie.
Imagine Puck, how he, with mocking jape,
Spoiled the rehearsal of the burghers' Play,
And weaver Bottom, his transmuted shape.
But ah ! methinks, unto my dying day,
For ye, what I beheld, have never seen,
I shall remember, nor will pass away
The recollection of that summer e'en,
Before the Master, such a Play, so played,
By Spirit Actors of so proud a mien.

The sun had set, and left the world in shade.
Ere Puck had spoke his Epilogue, and gone.
Soon dimmer twilight did the field invade.
But the white moon, above the tree-tops shone.
The stars, her handmaidens of lesser glow,
Peeped, gathered in their places, one by one.
Quoth gentle Spenser : " To the valley low,
By mazy windings, down the steep hill-side,
Your path you taketh, where yon river flow.
Good luck and happiness from Heaven betide,
My cousin, for thy brief continuing day,
Thee, while in cottage of the flesh thou bide ;
Till in the grave thy bones men, sorrowing, lay,
And thou return, with thine accomplished praise,
Into the region of a longer stay !
Farewell ! For we go hence by diverse ways.
Tell to thy fellows what thine eyes have seen.
Say, thou hast, living man, beheld the face
Of Edmund Spenser of the Faërie Queen ;
Say that his lips utter such prophecy :
When the dry tree shall flourish and grow green,
Then England shall have great prosperity.
Ye snatch at shadows, and let go the meat,

Led by the shibboleth of party cry,
That dolts invented, and their dupes repeat.
Blind, who go not for wisdom to the wise,
But seek it of the person in the street!"

"Adieu!" saith Shakespeare. "Thy road that way lies,
Ours this way. Not upon the level plain
Is found the laurel, but on mountain rise.
Whoso would pluck it every nerve must strain,
Forego delights, and breathe a subtler air,
And commune in his soul with joy and pain.
We learn, by feeling, what our lines declare.
Our deepest message is with sadness fraught.
Ah! yet of joyance we have ample share.
We cull the vintage of ingathered thought,
And draw the rich wine from fermenting lees.
We be as gods, for we create from nought
A world, and people it with whom we please.
We know the song the Siren sang of old
To the wise Greek, by the Sicilian seas.
We know what the lost book of Sibyl told,
Or Trismegistus did divinely show,
Or mystic Orpheus harp on harp of gold."

"Adieu!" he said again, and turned to go.
"Farewell! ye greatest of our land, at prime."
I cried out, "unto whom Britain doth owe
So huge a debt. Inheritors of Time.
Your glory did an age of glory crown.
Who sit beside ye? Who your height may climb?
Your very greatness keepeth others down.
When I return into the world again,
And tell my story to the wondering Town,
Shall I find credence? Shall desire attain
To the wished goal, and I the laurel wear?
The road of life is but a crooked lane.
Who knoweth, if it issue here or there,
In the closed tomb, where all remembrance dies,
Or on the summit of the Muses' stair?"

We parted so. 'Neath the star-spangled skies,
Adown the steep slope, by the faint-marked way,
My lady led me. She, with better eyes,
Spied out the track, and pointed where it lay.
In the soft mist, and dim, deceptive, light,
I stumble after, as I blindly may.
A fair pavilion, in a meadow pight,
About a stone's throw from the water-side,
With open door, stood, tenantless, in sight.
My faltering steps thither doth Aurea guide.
Within, wax tapers, in the still night air,
Set in branched candlesticks, a day provide.
Upon a table, draped with napery fair,
Are fruits, and sugared cates, and spicèd wine.
A couch, with mattress of well-woven hair,
Where his tired limbs might wayfarer recline,
With snowy sheets, and broidered counterpane,
Is spread. Quoth Aurea: "This tent is thine.
"Enter, recruit thee, for thy want is plain.
To men 'tis weariness to fast too long.
Nor bite, nor sup, thou hast, since morning, ta'en.
'Tis food and wine make bodies to be strong.
We, that are spirits, neither drink nor eat.
Our thirst is only for the joy of song.
To smell sweet odours is our pleasant meat.
But thou, who the caged beast within thee bear,
Must throw him sops, and many times repeat.
Taste, my soul's brother, delicate the fare.
This cup, these manchets of ambrosial bread,
That inly strengthen, prithee, do not spare."

To sounds, as of Eolian lutes, I fed,
And to my lip, discreet, the chalice pressed,
Obedient to the word my lady said.
When I was done, "Sweet friend and gentle guest,
Upon this seemly couch thy limbs compose."
My lady saith, "for thou hast need of rest.
Soon as to-morrow's sun in Orient shows,
I will awake thee, who now bid good-night."

She took a harp, and the tent flap drew close.
In the fair meadow, in the pale moonlight,
She sate her down, beneath a thorn of may.
She tuned the strings, and every chord drew tight,
And then a prelude did divinely play.
She sang the legend of Atlantis old,
Whelmed deep in ocean, lost to light of day.

"I tell the tale, as I myself was told,
Of the vast Isle, lapped by the blue, salt wave.
Its mines were rich in silver and much gold.
Rubies the soil, pearls the sea waters gave.
Fair, as the children of the gods divine,
Its daughters, strenuous its sons and brave.
These, more in number than the stars that shine,
Could hurl the dart and wield the falchion well,
Straight, tall, the brothers of the mountain pine.
Theirs was a land of forest and of dell,
Of sunny vineyard on each sloping hill,
Of snow-capped mountain and of craggy fell,
Of flowery meadow and of sparkling rill;
There did the shepherd watch his fleecy charge;
The sturdy yeoman did his glebe-land till,
And gather, with the sickle, harvest large;
There did the bustard and the wild swan nest,
By the broad river, on the reedy marge.
It was a garden which God's hand had blessed.
Ten princes, subject to one over-king,
Gave laws. He, paramount above the rest,
Sate throned. Much tribute many nations bring,
His vassals. For his fear is upon all.
He filleth all with his o'ershadowing wing.

"Vast were their buildings, as themselves were tall,
Piercing with tower and cupola the sky;
Cities, with port and battlemented wall,
And gardens, which with those of gods dared vie,
Fulfilled of pleasantness and all delight,
And chambered tombs, where sceptred monarchs lie.
In palaces, that ape the hills in height,

Their dainty limbs mild princesses repose,
Cushioned on beds of alabaster white,
Whom do their gilded lattices enclose,
Too nice to touch our common earth with feet,
Or to the mob display the guarded rose.
Huge were their temples, for the dweller meet,
With court, with nave, with curtained inner shrine,
With long arcade, with altars, ever sweet
With incense fumes, that earth with heaven combine,
Where served the priest, and danced the vestal maid,
Arrayed in linen raiment, clean and fine.

"'Twas the world's market, and her mart of trade.
Ships of the merchants, at her marble quays,
Year after year full cargoes did unlade,
Rich spices, and all rare commodities,
From Ind, from Ophir, from the mystic Isle
Of Taprobane, brought o'er Arabian seas,
Before the Pharaoh to the banks of Nile
Drew many captives of his bow and spear,
Stone upon stone his Pyramid to pile;
When Babylon itself was but a mere,
Ere did the Magian watch the starry night,
And by the Zodiac divide the year.
The sons of Atlas, in their glorious might,
All arts, all letters and all science knew.
They could decipher by the wild bird's flight
Thing that should come, could sever false from true.
Ah! but were warned not by their auguries
Of the still danger, which beneath them grew.
Vain is the wisdom of the seeming wise.
Blind is the prophet in a nation blind.
Peace, peace, he speaketh, but his words are lies.

"An hundred generations of mankind,
Men lived, were married, begat sons, and died,
Did kill, or save alive, did loose, or bind,
And tire the Heaven with overweening pride;
Men orgulous of heart, a stiff-necked race,

Swift to shed blood. The booty they divide.
Of promise true, for coward lie seemed base.
They held the laggard and the weak in scorn.
They dared the lion in his wrath to face,
Nor feared the might of any woman-born.
The war-shout, and the rush of hurrying fray,
To them was gladness, as of bridal morn.
An hundred generations, so men say,
These flourished, children of the world's young prime,
Did valiant deeds, and glorious, passed away.
Till, in the fullness of appointed time,
A Daughter of the Kings, divinely fair,
Weighed the poised balance, steeped in heinous crime.
So much her beauty did all hearts ensnare,
She grasped the sceptre, held in better hand,
Nor God she heeded, nor of man had care.
Riding, in arms, throughout the bleeding land,
She, with man's heart in bosom feminine,
Slayeth all such as venture to withstand,
Drunken with blood, as some be drunk with wine;
Each branch she loppeth, that too high aspire,
And pruneth the luxuriant growing vine.
Lawless her loves, and pitiless her ire.
He died, who looked with unpermitted gaze.
He died, who did fulfil her foul desire.
Smite thou the world, and thee the world obeys.
It is thine ass, and will thy burden bear.
She smote it, and her breast no pity stays.
King's sons her eunuchs, and their sisters fair,
Her waiting-women, in her presence stand,
And deck the tresses of her raven hair;
Whose fathers fell before her conquering brand,
Must fear the rod in servile garb arrayed,
And watch the motion of their mistress' hand.
Impious in soul, arrogant she forbade
All holy ritual, all pious prayer,
That gift be brought, or any vow be paid.
Herself more worthy than the gods that were,
Men shall but worship at her golden shrine,

Observe her feast, her sacrifice prepare.
The wrath was kindled of the Power Divine.
God looked from heaven, and he his prophet sent:
Hear, erring daughter of a royal line,
The bow is in my hand, and ready bent.
An hundred morns, an hundred evenings, still
Doth mercy grant. Haply, ye will repent.
If not, the valley shall o'ertop the hill.
Ye shall be low, who lift your horn so high.
Queen of rebellious heart and froward will,
Thou shalt not die the common death men die,
But, with thy people, living shalt go down
Into the deep, a vanished memory.
Her stern brow darkened with imperious frown.
Her jewelled arm she, scorning, did extend:
What of thyself, thou base, unmannered, clown,
Said he, the sender, who thee forth did send?
Was't this? 'The traitor shall have briefer day.
Sealed are the lips, by leasing that offend.'
She signed. The spearmen in their armed array,
Guards of the palace who kept watch around,
Smote him. In his own blood he weltering lay.
They feared not, neither she, that Empress crowned,
Nor the grim guardsmen, nor the gay-plumed crowd
Of soft-voiced minions. But the moving ground
Shook with a tremor. And a rumbling loud
Sounded from earth's deep caverns, far below.
The crenelated towers their tall heads bowed.
It was a forebode of impending woe.
God doth not hasten. He doth not delay.
His clock is set. It is not fast, nor slow.
Yet who his judgment, in his hour, may stay?
Anon the red flames, on each mountain height,
Burst forth, that almost very night is day.
From their rent hollows, incandescent, white,
The molten rivers of hot lava flow.
The sun is darkened, that the day seem night.

" They mock : *Our fathers, in the long ago,*
Saw the like thing, but it soon passed away.
The gods are far, they neither care, nor know,
What our hand do, nor hearken if we pray.
For miracles are not. The world doth run
In its set course as in our fathers' day.
Nor anything is new beneath the sun.
What we behold, that shall our children see.
Earth hath an ague. 'Twill be quickly done.

" Woe to the land for its impiety!
Woe to the hind ! Woe to the spearman tall !
Woe to the lips, that speak proud blasphemy !
To such as fear not, though the sky should fall !
Woe to the mistress and the waiting maid !
Woe to the shepherd's hut, the manor hall !
Woe to the merchant in the mart of trade !
Woe to the bridegroom and the veiléd bride !
Woe to the minstrel, for his song is stayed !
Woe to the dancer, for her limbs are tied !
Woe to the courtier in his silk attire !
Woe to the Queen in her presumptuous pride !
Woe to the rich, whose hand withhold the hire
From the pale drudge ! Woe to the robber tower !
Woe to the babe, the mother, and the sire !

" Ah, for the lily with the golden flower !
The subterranean fires that inly prey,
A worm about its nether root, devour
The matted fibres, till the stalk decay.
Beneath is void, and it must settle down
Into the deep, on its appointed day.
Lo ! Great Atlantis, mother of renown,
In the vast caldron of the boiling sea,
She that of earth was diadem and crown,
Slow sinketh, first-born child of history.
Then women beat the breast and rend the hair.
Perish alike the bondman and the free.
Disdainful, in her gold and ivory chair,

With a set smile, the proud, imperious, Queen
Nor wept, nor uttered unavailing prayer.
Fearless, she went down to the world unseen,
Amid her maidens, and her men in mail.
Now Great Atlantis is not, and hath been.
Now doth the shipman ignorantly sail
O'er fanes and palaces of long ago.
Now is the hill-top lower than the vale.
And the storms gather, and the wild winds blow
Above, but, underneath, 'tis calm and still,
Where tangle-weed around and sea-wrack grow."

CANTO IV

Sleep, as a garment, folded me around,
Lulled by the music of that old-world lay,
Soothed by the voice, that did so sweetly sound,
And the skilled hands, that did the harp-chords sway,
Until the dim stars went out, one by one,
And rosy-fingered dawn led in the day.
When, from his chamber, the rejoicing sun
Came forth to look upon the world again,
When had the lark his matin hymn begun,
And merle and mavis joined in blithe refrain,
When, slowly lifting, hugged the hill-top high
The morning mist, that on the field had lain,
Aurea, without, at my tent door, made cry:
"Stir thee, my brother, for the night is sped.
The day is come. Lo! sluggard sloth put by.
To sleep is to be mimic of the dead.
Awake. Array thee. We have far to go."
I heard, and forthwith did forsake my bed.
For at that voice, so musical and low,
Methinks, I should awaken from the grave,
If the cold ear can listen or can know.
In running water face and hands I lave,
And, soon as perfect in my garbed array,
Look for my lady. But a merry stave
She singeth, where she sit, beneath the may.
"Of loveliness why hath the rose such share?
Oh! not to linger on one bush alway.

So white a coat why doth the lily wear?
That one may pluck her from her native dell,
To cherish her with fond and loving care.
Why doth the violet so sweetly smell?
Although she hideth, she would fain be found,
Hence, she her whereabout will slyly tell.
Why doth the damsel go so seemly gowned?
Because she spreadeth for a man her net.
Upon her cheeks, which are Love's garden ground,
Roses and lilies are together met.
Why robe her virginal in lily snows?
With love she toyeth, the demure coquette.
Hid, as the violet, herself she shows.
But when she thinketh of her marriage bell,
Oh! then her blush is as the summer rose.
In maiden bosom tender fancies dwell.
For ladies love that they be wooed and won,
And the gold hoop, that fit the finger well."
I joined my lady when her song was done.
Either to other we gave greeting fair,
Then turned our eyes to view the risen sun.
Deep breaths I draw of the cool morning air,
And look about, and, at the water-side,
Soon of an angler with his rod aware,
Connote him kinsman of my blood allied,
One, who showed kindness in my boyish day,
Ere, grown, he faded from the world, and died.
Aurea called to him: "Fisherman, I pray,
Bring what thou hast, if thou have any caught."
My lady's word he did not disobey,
But hasted, and his dish of troutling brought.
Then lit a fire, and cleaned, and broiled, and laid
His broil on charger of rich silver wrought.
Aurea sought manchets, and my beverage made.
Quoth she, "Sweet brother, thou didst poorly dine,
A guest Duke Humphrey to his table bade.
Eat now, if thy goodwill respond to mine."
Herself did diligent the board prepare
With every needful thing, and napery fine.

I thanked my lady for her loving care,
And broke my fast with wholesome appetite.
Except for bones, I left the platter bare.
She spake again, that vision of delight:
"My friend, make ready, for the road is long
We twain must travel betwixt now and night,
Though mass and meat, the proverb saith not wrong,
Were never to man's work impediment;
They make the soul and body to be strong.
Before the dew, upon the grass, be spent,
We should be far." Then said I: "Give command,
Sweet Captain, when 'tis time to strike the tent,
For I will follow, by thine own white hand,
Though grim Apollyon the path bestride,
To the world's end, though death its sentry stand."

The pearl was in the rose-cup still undried.
The golden sun had not ascended high,
When we set forth. I many forms descried
Upon the meadow. Some were far, some nigh.
Her I beheld, upon whose heart is writ
The name of Calais. With her dying sigh,
She said so. Woman of no slender wit.
Her soul, by nature, merciful and kind,
Had evil council not corrupted it.
So superstition doth its votaries blind.
Her royal ermine hath a crimson stain.
In marriage bed she little joy did find,
Who placed her neck beneath the foot of Spain.
Great was her mother's wrong. Oh! cast no stone
At child made cruel by her mother's pain.
Pole, the wise Cardinal, nigh to the throne,
The supple Gardiner, Norfolk premier Lord,
These formed her levée. But one walked alone,
Her blameless rival, by the river bord,
Brief queen, and mo[illegible]ter for a May-day game.
On her the greatness, that her soul abhorred,
He thrust, who did her filial reverence claim.
He moved the counters. She must forfeit pay,

And with the guilty bear an equal blame.
Upon the threshold of her life's young day
She died, upon whom gentle souls have rue,
Born under evil planet, sweet Jane Grey.
Lo! there, where clustering limes their blossoms strew,
That fair young Platonist, that harmless dove,
Ill-mated in the wilder goshawk's mew.
But Roger Ascham from the linden grove
Issued. When she beheld her Tutor near,
She did accost him with such reverent love,
As might a child accost a parent dear.
These walked together by the water-side,
In earnest talk that did not reach mine ear.
The Lady Jane, when she mine Aurea spied,
Drew toward us, and spake words of courtly grace:
"Sweet sister, though the gulf of time divide
Us twain. Oh! perfect in thy form and face,
Whom Beauty taketh as her looking-glass,
When she desire her lineaments to trace."

But Aurea said: "Each shepherd so his lass
Praiseth. Unto his love each poet swain
So maketh sonnet. Let my beauty pass.
But, gentle mistress, if thy soul be fain
To know the reason of this path we tread,
God willeth this man should have knowledge plain
Of us the world, in ignorance, call dead.
I lead him, where, with all his chivalry,
King Arthur sitteth, at the fountain-head."

She spake, that other of the day gone by:
"When thou return, friend, to thy world again,
Tell to thy fellows, thou, with mortal eye,
Hast looked upon me, where we souls remain.
Say, that in happiness we spirits dwell,
In a fair realm, nor suffer loss or pain.
We drink the waters of no failing well,
And grow in wisdom, as we grow in grace.
So much our present doth our past excel."

Then I: "Sweet Madam, set so high in place,
Great is my privilege to meet with thee,
And, living man, upon thy visage gaze."
Adieu! to her, who did companion me,
She smiled, and to myself she smiled, adieu!
And tripped with light foot o'er the meadow lea.

The two strong wrestlers, whom ambition threw,
Northumberland I saw, and Somerset,
Who did his hand in brother's blood imbrue,
And perished, taken in an equal net;
With the Sixth Edward, that fair Tudor rose,
Faded so soon, whom pious tears regret,
More happy, peradventure, God, he knows,
Than had he lived, until his claws were grown,
The lion cub, in whom the lion shows,
To fill, in manhood, a maturer throne.
For the king walketh in a perilous way,
Whom none dare question, nor his act disown.
The young Josiah of too brief a day!
God took him. For the land had bitter need
Of sterner measures and more rigid sway.
Ill bramble-growths had choked the precious seed.
Heaven was their pretext, covetous desire
Their weighing motive, till the purer creed
Shone, tested in the baptism of fire.
They, who but serve God out of worldliness,
Will serve the devil for an equal hire.
But we, the peril of whose day is less,
Dare we the doubter and the weak to blame,
Who stood not steadfast, nor endured the stress?
Had not our failure been as theirs the same?
'Tis easy dying, as the soldier die.
The martyr hath hard end and present shame.
Unto the thought, which I thought inwardly,
Aurea made answer: "Brother, thou think'st wrong.
Not in their own might torment they defy,
But in the strength, wherewith God maketh strong.
Their loss is parent of a greater gain.

God doth not leave them, nor they suffer long.
Perfect in soul, and purified by pain,
The joy is theirs, for which we longing wait.
Our lot is set on intermediate plane.
We catch a glimpse, but they have passed the gate.
We tent without, until the Judgment-day,
For good or evil, put the seal on fate."
Softly she sighed, and thoughtful took her way.
The steps I follow of my gentle guide,
Nor other word, awhile, doth either say.

To win to the fair river's further side,
To cross it needed by a bridge of wood,
Worm-eaten, old, which I suspicious eyed,
But overcame the coward in my blood,
When my sweet lady with light foot tripped o'er.
"My lady doth not mean me harm but good,"
I said, nor asked for any reason more,
But trusted to the creaking boards my weight,
And passed in safety, where she went before.
As, at a flower-show, or a village fête,
Of all the neighbourhood the folk are there;
In the green meadow, of a compass great,
Walk comely ladies and knights debonnair.
There with her Surrey the fair Geraldine
Eye lighted on, i' faith, a goodly pair.
Oh! she was lovely, clad in silver sheen,
Under a mantle of gold tissue wrought;
He well to look upon, of handsome mien,
A lover equal to his lady's thought.
Upon the cithern he had skill to play
The melodies his native Muse him taught,
And, in the tilt-yard, bore the ring away,
The knightly troubadour and poet-knight,
Meet both for ladies' bower and stir of fray.
The dying tyrant, in his jealous spite,
Doomed his, the last and noblest head of all,
So greatly wrong did overbear the right,
Untimely, by the headsman's axe to fall.

Yet Orpheus with his lute led forest trees.
Arion's harp dumb fishes did enthrall.
Ruder, more savage, is the man than these.
But they be passed beyond our world's confine,
Beyond the tossing of life's troubled seas,
Young Surrey and his Lady Geraldine.
They turn, and welcome me with greeting kind,
And their proud heads, in friendliness, incline :
"Sweet Sir, upon whose brow the Muse hath signed
Her mark, and willed thee to become her own,
Thou, that the curtain hast been let behind,
We know thee, by the world less fully known.
Have trust. The summer of thine after praise
Will for the winter of neglect atone.
And loving hands shall thy memorial raise,
Nor thou be counted among those who die,
And are not, who but filled an idle place,
And, unremembered, pass from memory.
Thou that hast power with living foot to tread
Our peopled realm, and our estate descry,
Say to thy brethren : *They who live are dead.*
But the dead live. We, whose works merit fame,
Here dwell in gladness, and on honoured head
Still wear the laurel, with which crowned we came.
Hatred and envy died at death. Not here,
Ill-judging censure and opprobrious blame
Tarnish the brightness of our spirit-sphere.
Our enemy doth here become our friend.
Ugly things past but as a dream appear.
Here all her breakage doth kind Fortune mend.
Fair Sir, fair greeting, in the Muses' name,
To thee we tender, and the neck we bend.
Both thou and I to poesy lay claim.
What was the gentle Geraldine to me,
To thee this miniature God did frame.
Sweet ladies kiss, for sisters fair ye be.
Embrace, ye twain, for ye twin glories are,
By whom we pluck fruit from Pierian tree."

"With Surrey's worth I boast not to compare,"
I said, "nor am in birth, as he was, high.
If I the laurel shall have right to wear,
Who knoweth? Hid 'tis in futurity.
Most honourable Lord, of thy proud race
Thou dost the children and the sires outvie.
The times, which thou didst share, were stirring days,
In which the present from the past was born.
Ye looked upon the world with twofold gaze,
With Janus eyes, that saw both night and morn.
But I, methinks, on Britain's closing day.
Our royal greatness is a robe outworn.
Proud England sinketh into sere decay.
Unto the smiter we turn coward cheek.
We blench, too womanish, at threat of fray.
When, sword in hand, we should reprisals seek,
We step into the mud, and yield the wall.
The strong we cringe to. We coerce the weak.
We suffer wrong, nor for revenge we call.
Each for himself. All opportunists mere.
Who careth for the common weal of all?
Oh, base! Should manly breast nurse girlish fear?
We, who once stood against the world at bay!
When duty calleth, and its voice is clear,
Should men, as merchants, loss and profit weigh?
The star of England did not so prevail.
The debt of honour is the first to pay.
But when the manhood of a land grow stale,
And men care nothing, but to sell and buy,
'Tis bitter loss, and sign of coming bale."

"Christ shield our England in extremity!"
He said, that son of a robuster age,
When, for a principle, men dared to die.
"But, Sir, take comfort. Ye be slow to wage
An honourable war and count the cost.
But ye be stubborn, when ye once engage,
When blare the trumpets, and when spears are crossed.
In English bosoms is no cowardice.

Your manhood sleepeth, but it is not lost."
Thus he, who did mayhap use truer eyes,
For lookers on more clearly note the game.
God keep us, and our statesmen render wise!
So these departed by the way they came,
And looked behind, and waved a last adieu!
The pair, whom Love had touched with equal flame.

Sir Thomas Wyatt cometh into view,
Second to Surrey in his living day.
Ah! yet I rank him with the chosen few.
"Fair friends, fair greeting, as ye take your way,"
He saith, "unto the lawn of asphodel,
And orchard, with its apple blossom gay,
Where Arthur, in Avilion, doth dwell,
Surrounded by his glorious chivalry,
Who fought at Badon, and at Camlan fell.
The moon-morn of the Feast of Trinity,
An hundred thousand, clad in harness bright,
Marched forth, at dawn, upon the summer lea.
Ninety-nine thousand, stiff and stark, ere night,
Lay in their blood, on the war-trampled plain,
When set the sun on Britain's broken might.
So many died, in that stern battle slain.
But the three queens death-stricken Arthur bore,
Aboard the barge, with their attendant train,
Toward fair Avilion, that island shore,
To be recovered of his grievous wound,
King once, yet, maybe, to be king once more,
If foreign foot insult our native ground,
And hostile armies flaunt their banners spread
On British soil, nor other help is found."

"Sir," I made answer, "so hath legend said.
I think, he never will revive again,
Till the last trumpet shall awake the dead.
His reign is o'er. On earth he cannot reign.
God keep our native land inviolate
Of hostile foot! This jewel of the main

From such he safeguard, as it envying hate !
Still our proud navy rule the subject sea,
And peace and war upon our action wait ! "

" God grant ! " he said, " if aught may lasting be.
What rampart like is to the Spartan wall,
While men have patriot hearts, and soldierly ?
Our England is an oak, wide-branchéd, tall,
So deeply rooted, she is strongly stayed.
Tempest and storm she disregardeth all.
And many rest beneath her fostering shade.
Trust in yourselves. If ye yourselves defend.
To the self-helper Heaven is present aid.
But, Sir, I prithee, be so far my friend,
As show—for olden fashions change to new—
Doth still my memory to your day extend ?
One generation, or at most, but two,
Men recollect us, but they soon forget.
On shelf they keep us, but they read not through."

" Sir," I replied, " thy verse we study yet,
We that are scholars, and it sweet we find.
As to the vulgar, who much store would set
Upon the judgment of the vulgar mind ?
'Tis odds that they have never learned thy name,
Which, so far, fetters of oblivion bind.
But, with the thoughtful and the wise, thy fame
Is fixed, thou morn-star of the recent day,
To whom in modern dress the Muse first came."

We changed adieux, and took again our way.
Colet I saw, and good Sir Thomas More,
Who jesting word did, on the scaffold, say,
And still he jesteth, as, in life, before ;
Anon, I looked on the great Cardinal,
And Cromwell, faithful to the coat he wore ;
And sweet Anne Boleyn, graceful, slender, tall,
Unhappy, whom ambition did betray,
To teach the world a proverb by her fall :

And the strong lion, roaring for the prey,
Who picked the carcase, till the bones were clean,
Whom did the nation, as their God, obey,
The greatest Tudor, royally beseen,
Kinglike of aspect, pitiless and proud,
Bluff and outspoken, yet of gracious mien.

I passed, with Aurea, through the moving crowd,
Who cast no shadows. 'Mid the goodly throng,
Changed word with some, to some, in passing, bowed.
But Aurea said: "We may not tarry long.
Before the dew upon the grass be dry,
We must be hence, before the sun be strong,
Which now is half-way to the zenith high."
I did assent. What my liege-lady bade
Was to me good. "Sweet, what thou wilt, will I."

Beyond the meadow, 'neath the deep-leaved shade
Of spreading elm trees, in a double row,
Was a green lane. The moss a carpet made.
There did the clematis and woodbine grow,
With intermingled roses, red and white,
And foxgloves, and the mullein's paler glow.
Passed, sauntering, a young and comely knight,
The Tudor Arthur, to the throne denied,
Then turned a corner, and was lost to sight.
Passed his worn parent, with the lovely bride,
Elizabeth of York, his care-lined brow
Topped with the diadem, shrewd, thoughtful-eyed,
As one who pondered on the when and how.
He, by his marriage, jarring strife made cease,
And for the palm branch changed his laurel bough.
None other, in the lane, save only these,
I met, and issued, from the climbing lane,
Upon a country, that is bare of trees,
Golden with gorse, the pewit's lone domain,
Where she doth scream her melancholy cry,
And chide the passer, who disturb her reign.
Here, ling and heather, with the purple dye,

Their scent with the perennial gorse-bloom blend;
And wild thyme, and the wilder bilberry,
That to the valley scorneth to descend,
Strive with the rivals, that their ground contest.
The wars of Nature have no pause, nor end.
But with the labour, and the heat, oppressed—
The feet grow tardy, when the hair turns grey—
I said: "Sweet lady, give me leave to rest,
Our steps have traversed a thrice three mile way.
My years their grand climacteric have passed,
Seven times nine years, and a yet longer day.
Man's youthful muscles minish with Time's waste.
Upon this bank let us sit down awhile.
Ill speed he maketh, who proceed in haste."
My sweet queen answered, with a pleasant smile:
"Dear friend, 'tis reason, and a gained request.
Our feet have measured a thrice-league-long mile.
The day's before us. Sit, and take thy rest,
Till by yon orb be half his journey gone,
And he from southward bend his course toward west."

I sate me down upon a boulder stone,
And she, my mistress, on the heather spray.
Then sweetly did she sing in soft, low, tone,
"Of a fair Island that is far away,
And of the loves of Paul and Virginie,
E'en as the children of earth's primal day,
Who lived and loved. But her the cruel sea,
Drowning, o'erwhelmed. They, side by side, are laid
In nuptial chamber of the tomb. Ah me!
Beneath the graceful palm-tree's wavering shade,
Lover and loved, the bridegroom and the bride.
Lovers that resting-place their haunt have made.

"Who may from Paul his Virginie divide?
Or separate her Paul from Virginie?
Their true love-knot was more securely tied,
Than was the Gordian knot, which sword might free.

Fragrant their lives. One sepulchre they share,
Married in death, conjoined in unity.

"Light be the turf above ye blameless pair,
Thou son and daughter of the tropic zone,
For ye have done with earthly toil and care,
Nor change, nor minishing of love have known.
Yours the long sleep. But little need have ye
Of lying epitaph on chiselled stone,
Our hearts the temples of your memory,
While lady's lip by lover's lip be pressed,
Or maiden blush, or promise binding be."

Quoth I: "When love be perfect, death is best.
Our glowing fancies with our youth decay.
When the snow showeth on the mountain crest,
It is a forecast of the winter day.
The flowrets wither in secluded dell,
When frosts have powdered all the hills with grey.
More ardent fires in youthful bosom dwell.
But, lady, by thy wisdom, solve me this,
When man and woman love each other well,
And each hath gladness, whose the greater bliss?"
She shook her head. "Brother, how should I know?
We can but answer for ourselves, I wis,
We women, and with men 'tis even so.
Not husband wife, nor wife can husband read
Throughout, though mated in one path they go.
But great your gladness, if it ours exceed."
So to my question Aurea replied.
For sex is deeper than use law decreed.
It is a line, that doth the world divide.
What is the woman, but man's complement?
Although the shrieking sisterhood deride,
Who walk not in the way their mothers went;
Striving to be, what they can never grow,
They nurse the winter of their discontent.

But when the sun passed the meridian: "Lo!
Time calls," said Aurea. "Rise up. Quit thy seat.

For there are many things I yet must show,
And thou must look upon. The moments fleet.
Tied down to limit of so short a day,
Lag not, my brother, but thy task complete."
I said : "Sweet lady, do thou point the way,
And I will follow, where my lode-star guide."
"Certes," she said, "and make no more delay."
With quickened step, in unison we hied,
Athwart the common, gay with red and gold,
O'er which the melancholy curlew cried.
One, whom the royal purple did enfold,
Stood by me. He wore diadem on head.
A prince he seemed, both politic and bold,
Yet troubled inwardly with haunting dread.
He looked upon me with a haughty brow.
"Is the pen equal to the sword?" he said.

"Sir, thy great parts we, reverent, allow,"
I said, "and thy high rank. Yet take from me
This truth : one rotten and ill-favoured bough
May bring discredit on a goodly tree.
Tyrant, and traitor, in thy turn betrayed,
All is not true, that was alleged of thee,
And other's acts upon thy head are laid.
Still reddened is thy hand with murder stain.
Blood will not out, nor its remembrance fade."

"I reigned in England with no tyrant reign,"
He said, "nor justice to the poor denied.
By usurpation I the crown did gain,
But graced it well. On Bosworth field I died,
In arms, a soldier, by a soldier's hand.
Then did the White Rose wither in its pride."
As one who doth in doubt of Judgment stand,
He seemed, who school himself to show no fear.
He looked a king, accustomed to command,
Whose wish is needle, by which course he steer.
He stalked athwart the common haughtily.
As he went off, another hath drawn near,

The princely Buckingham, who reached so high,
Before the right prevailed above the wrong,
On scaffold, doomed, by felon axe, to die,
Ere yet the stronger overcame the strong.
"Fair Lord," I said, "thou liv'dst in stirring day,
Your lives were full, though they were seldom long.
With you 'twas summer, ere with us 'tis May.
Great stakes ye played for, and paid heavy fine.
Few heads amongst you found their locks grow grey."

"For, Sir, the blood was in our veins as wine.
And crowded action in a little space
Is more," he said, "than life of longer line.
When soft the muscle, and the brain decays,
'Tis not to live, but lingering death to die.
Who liveth long outliveth oft his praise."

This said, he passed, and Hastings' foot drew nigh.
Short was his shrift, and sudden was his doom.
He held his head among his fellows high,
Nor, in the sunshine, saw the gathering gloom,
Cut off by him, whom he believed his friend,
And laid, dishonoured, in a traitor's tomb.
'Lady, whose loveliness doth so transcend,"
He said, "the beauties of my living day,
Tell me, sweet Madam, if I not offend,
Whither and wherefore ye do take your way.
Can one embodied pass the misty gate?
A soul, flesh-cumbered, hath it leave to stray
Thorough the region of the mid estate?
Give thanks to God, Sir, if the thing be so,
For sure, thy favour in his eyes is great."

Quoth she, my lady, "Dost thou list to know
The why and whither of this road we wend?
Give ear, my lord, to what, in brief, I show.
This my companion and my loving friend
God chose, into whose mind we may not pry,
But must unto his will submissive bend,
That, in the flesh, he view with actual eye

The precincts of the land so long unseen.
The veil is lifted, that did o'er it lie.
The shadow-curtain, interposed between
The world of living and the world of dead,
For him is waived, as though it had not been.
Our flowery meadow he hath leave to tread.
But he hath drunk of the Castalian spring,
And on the honey of Hymettus fed.
He will return unto his folk, and bring
Tidings of us, how with us all is well.
God touched his lips, and gave him power to sing.
In woven rhymes he will his story tell,
What he did look upon, what he did hear,
In the fair region, where, apart, we dwell.
I guide his footsteps, and his path make clear.
My foot, companion to his foot, doth wend
By close, by common, or by reedy mere,
Until I lead him to his journey's end,
Through Camelot's evanished pride, to where,
Amid the waters, in an isle unkenned
Of earthly mariners, is sojourn fair
Of great Pendragon and his Table Round.
Queens for our escort, thither we repair."

"Oh, head with laurel destined to be crowned!"
Exclaimed Lord Hastings. "If my living name
Exist, nor in oblivion's flood is drowned,
Make that my praise be greater than my blame,
Whom women's wiles a little led astray,
And brought dishonour on my better fame."

He did depart. We took again our way.
My lady led me where a lakelet clear,
Beyond the moorland, in a bottom lay.
White swans and wildfowl haunt the sedge-fringed mere.
King-fishers, darting as a flash of light,
Appear, and vanish, and again appear.
Huge oaks, and elm-trees of exceeding height,
And graceful ashes, grow in clumps around,

And lawns, with daisies and with kingcups bright,
Slope gradually to the water bound,
And fragrant lilies, among roots of trees,
Spread a green floor-cloth on the tawny ground.
Wood-pigeons murmur, and the hum of bees
Doth mingle with the stir, in tree-top high,
Of leaves that whisper to the sighing breeze.
And spirit shapes, upon the sward, flit by.
In groups they cluster by the fair tarn-side,
Great names, and makers of great history.
There smile the Princes, in the Tower who died.
Elizabeth is there, that hapless Queen,
And the Fourth Edward, in his pomp of pride;
Rivers and Dorset; many more, I ween;
Sir Thomas Malory, that honest knight,
Who drew from old books what, of old, had been;
And Caxton, fountain of our fuller light,
Our English parent of the printed page.
To him such honour, as is his, of right,
I pay, that Master and wise Archimage.
He looked upon me: "Sir, my son art thou,
If war with the world's ignorance thou wage.
Yet, of the boon I did invent, I trow,
Half I repent me. Men buy gold too dear.
They pawn the future for the present now.
Ephemera, that do but live one year!
Ye make mine honourable craft a trade,
Nor study letters, but advantage mere."

"What marvel?" said I, seeing some have made
A god their belly, godliness their gain.
The soul, that is not upon virtue stayed,
Is frail before the shower of golden rain.
As doth the harlot to be clothed and fed
Make traffic of herself, we sell our brain,
And prostitute our better part for bread.
Our bills we discount on futurity,
And care but little, so we now be read.
Of after-time we put the praises by.

Yet some, belike, have higher thought than these.
The fame they covet, that not soon will die.
But thou didst put into men's hands the keys
Of knowledge, whether 'twere for good or ill.
Some drink the wine, some batten on the lees.
The tree, that flourished on the Guarded Hill,
Bore fruit of evil, and bore fruit of good,
The kindly physic, and the drug that kill.
But now we poets are a race tabooed.
The trade will touch not nor accept our rhyme.
We, to no purpose, have the Muses wooed.
To weave sweet fancies is a waste of time.
The craft will bid not, nor the public buy.
A steeper road we, than our elders, climb."

Thus to the Founder of his Art said I.
But he: "My son, be bold, and persevere.
Yon oak, of hugeous bulk, that giant high,
Grew not to bigness in a single year.
Ill weeds thrive quickly. Ill weeds grow apace,
Then die. They live but for a season mere.
The strong tree dureth through unnumbered days.
We be the lords of our own destiny.
Good luck, and ill luck, is unmeaning phrase,
Heaven is our friend, ourselves our enemy.
Keep knocking still, till one unbar the door.
Impossible is but the sluggard's plea.
Improve the little, that thou hast, to more,
Unlike to him that in the napkin laid
His loan, and patience of his lord outwore,
Condemned, poor fool, in that excuse he made,
Who served a master, as he deemed, austere,
Exact, insistent, that his due be paid."

I lend unto his speech attentive ear,
And answer: "Friend, if I dare call thee friend,
So greatly gifted, of high princes peer,
The road I travel, if I find its end,
Which yet I know not, to the laurel bough

Will lead me. To that mark mine efforts tend.
We men of letters are a legion now.
Some win renown. Others, perforce, must fail.
There is not room upon Parnassus' brow.
Who dare to trust, that he must needs prevail,
Though he be conscious, that his worth is more,
Than some, whose breasts are cased in triple mail,
Fools, who the depths of foolishness explore?
To sow expectant, and no harvest gain,
To shoot, and hit not, is vexation sore."

He said: "Thy travail shall not all be vain.
Thou shalt bear child, for which the world will care.
So sweet the music of thy woven strain.
Enough of that. In our Fourth Edward's chair
Another Edward, of a milder mood,
Is set, of the great Queen a glorious heir.
Give thanks to God, for ye see days of good.
Long may he reign, and prosper in his reign!
Beneath his footstool lie his foes subdued!
And his proud navy rule the vassal main!
Letters and Arts and honourable Peace
Under his sceptre flourish and obtain!"

With brief "Adieu!" we bid farewell to these,
Beside the margin of the pool who stray.
A little distant is a grove of trees,
About a furlong, as I think, away,
Or may be more. Thither doth Aurea lead.
We talk together. She doth smiling say:
"What Caxton promise must his children heed."
"Madam," quoth I, "but he died long ago.
And to the scholar may the dunce succeed.
The publisher doth well his business know,
But we, poor authors, are a class apart.
They reap rich harvest, where we, painful, sow,
But care but little to promote good art.
Their only standard what will quickly sell.
I do not blame them. They must make their mart,

And study those, who please the vulgar well.
For common stomachs better love coarse meat,
Against which palates of fine taste rebel.
For now the masses with the wise compete.
And studious learning, from its pride of place
Thrust forth, is trampled on by witless feet.
The golden idol, set before our gaze,
All we must bow to, though its feet be clay,
And chaunt our litanies of fulsome praise."

"Not so," she said. "In this luxurious day,
If some choose riches, some choose fair renown.
Doth not the soldier serve for little pay,
And count it honour, that he serve the Crown?
The priest doth duty for a meagre dole.
Unto the Golden Calf such fall not down.
Base, in all ages, is the greater poll.
The salt of earth are but a chosen few.
Ever at war the flesh is with the soul.
Think not the trouble of your times is new.
Had not ten righteous turned aside the doom,
When God, in anger, Sodom overthrew,
Where fulness sat installed in virtue's room?
So 'twas. So 'twill be. Friend, 'tis ever so,
There, till ye pass the portal of the tomb."

As holding converse, we did forward go,
Neville, the setter up and puller down
Of mighty kings, laid erst, at Barnet, low,
So closely passed, he brushed my lady's gown,
Pondering, a far-off look in his dark eyes,
His forehead wrinkled with a thoughtful frown,
Last of the barons, rich in dignities.
I bare my head, but he doth not regard,
So seemed he lost in his own reveries.
Him ill did Edward for his zeal reward.
Scarce traitor, though a traitor's part he played.
By Barnet oak the baited bear died hard.
Scorning to fly, he waved his broken blade,

Above his kinsmen and his servants slain,
Face to the foe, and perished, unafraid.
Too great a vassal for a peaceful reign,
And better fitted for rude times of war.
His like we look not to behold again.

CANTO V

Into the greenwood led a hollow lane,
Deep-rutted, moss-grown, a secluded way,
Of width sufficient for a loaded wain,
No more, for carriage of the new-ripe hay.
There adder's-tongue, and the bee-orchis grow,
And ladies'-fingers, and the broom-bush gay,
With man-high foxgloves, dyed in Tyrian glow,
Convolvulus, and fitch, and wilding pea.
There strawberry-plants both fruit and blossom show.
Delicate fern-fronds, drooping gracefully,
And matted tangles of wild eglantine,
Clothe the high bank, a world of greenery.

Behold him, striker of the lyre divine!
'Tis will of Heaven, embodied form of clay,
He draw the curtain of the far confine,
And enter, visitant, the better day.
There, conversant he with the glorious dead
Doth speak, and listen to the word they say.
Lo! look upon him, with the grey-haired head,
Spare, dwarfed in stature, with the deep-set eyes,
From the low level of the lakelet bed,
To the fair coppice, see him mount the rise.
Hail to the lips that have been touched with fire!
Hail to the thinker of high thoughts and wise!
The sweet, shy goldfinch, and her sister choir,
As we climb upward, hymn such melody,

Those bright-eyed choristers, who never tire.
But soon we pass beneath the greenwood tree.
Within I find a fair and open glade.
Here many spirit forms I gathered see.

Under a great horse-chestnut's spreading shade,
By Margaret the gentle Henry stood,
More meet for cloister than for clash of blade,
But all unfitted for a time so rude;
Unto the proverb his life gave the lie,
That saith: *Doves spring not from an eagle brood.*
Towered princely young Plantagenet hard by,
By stabbing swords, on field of Tewkesbury, slain,
Golden-haired Edward, of such promise high.
His blood on York's hand left a butcher stain.
The blood of Lancaster, that should aspire,
Then sank into the thirsty ground like rain.
I view the daughter of the Fiddler sire,
That manly lady, that proud Amazon.
How can I but her qualities admire?
The soldier's steel she boldly buckled on.
No woman's pity did her bosom know.
I praise not all things that her hand hath done.
High-mettled barons of the long ago,
The warlike wearers of the fair red rose,
Wait on her, sharers in her pride and woe.
Man reapeth harvest of the seed he sows.
The blood debt is a cumulative debt.
And he who strike will be repaid with blows.
They died, and widows' cheeks with tears were wet,
And orphans sorrowed for a father slain.
Northumberland, and noble Somerset,
Steel-hearted Clifford, Oxford fighting-fain,
By headsman's axe they perished, or the sword,
And watered with their blood each English plain.
Proudly they looked, each haught Lancastrian lord.
The Muse is silent amid civil jars.
I gazed upon them, but I spake no word.
Our laurels grow not on the field of Mars.

For letters love the halcyon days of peace,
But wither in the blight of factious wars.

In brief, we tarry little while by these.
Next I note Gloucester, with his high-souled dame,
Who fare to meet us, 'neath the leafy trees.
"Thine eyes, sweet friend, upon mine acted shame
Have looked," she said, "when, taper held in hand,
Barefoot and sheeted, through the streets I came."

"Yea! Madam, but the plot was foully planned,
Rather," quoth I, "thy Humphrey to disgrace,
Than for thy fault. That in a Christian land
Ill rancour so should charity displace,
By subornation and malicious art
To cast a blemish on so fair a face!"

"Sir, Eleanor doth thank thee from her heart,"
She said. "Once, living woman, proud was I,
Till, sorrow-taught, I chose the better part,
And, wiser, clothe me with humility.
For what are we to be so proud and vain?
Are we the pillars, that uphold the sky?
'Tis God, not we, who bringeth sun and rain.
Not we, but He, who causeth grass to grow.
He numbereth the drops of the great main,
And from the spring-head maketh rivers flow.
We, pensioners, depend upon his grace,
Who, bountiful, his largesse doth bestow.
Man's pride is nought, for he but nothing weighs.
He nothing hath, that he did not receive.
Should he not walk in lowliness of ways?
For pride is sinful, and it God doth grieve.
We were born naked, and we naked die,
And others enter on the goods we leave.
But, friend, I prithee, wilt thou show the why
And whither of this journey, that thou wend,
Permitted visitant with living eye
To view our precinct—Heaven is, sure, thy friend—

Save God upon thy lips embargo laid,
Or I, by curious questioning, offend?"

Aurea replied: "Be gentle Christ our aid,
And bring us four to his eternal rest!
Servant of God, his bidding I obeyed,
And punctual perform his high behest.
Into his secret mind we may not pry.
This man he willed, a temporary guest,
Should enter, and our hidden realm descry,
Thither, whence came he, to return again,
And carry tidings of our state, who die;
A poet, to reveal, in woven strain,
Our modes and fashions to his fellow kind,
How death is nothing but a bugbear vain,
How death is mother of a life behind.
We habit not a land of gloom and care.
Our eyes are opened, which before were blind.
We look upon this sun and breathe this air,
Nor doth the season of our summer wane,
Nor age the vigour of our limbs impair.
Hunger and thirst and weariness and pain
Afflict us not. Unto the roundelay
Of the blithe birds our ear doth listen fain.
We drink of gladness all the live-long day.
We haunt the meadow and the fair greenwood,
As laughing children, all whose hours are play.
With lily blossoms we our tresses snood,
And weave us garlands of the comely rose.
With these we deck ourselves in frolic mood.
Hour after hour, the day unheeded goes.
Daughters and sons of immortality,
We change life's labour for eterne repose.
Here is content, and sweet-faced harmony.
Ill-wishing envy sleepeth in the grave,
And rancorous hatred sepulchred doth lie.
That we desire, that, verily, we have.
To will is parent of perfected deed.
Not here the soul is to the body slave."

"Sweet thanks, sweet Madam. Sir, a fair God-speed!"
Said Eleanor. "An if thou mention me,
Fair friend, do't gently, for I kindness need."

Stout Gloucester laughed: "A marvel, verily!
'Twixt then and now, the difference how wide!
That Eleanor, that ape of vanity,
Who shamed me, living, by her towering pride,
Should humble her so much to man mean-born,
Or, grant him gentle, not to kings allied!"

She said: "Sweet husband, if I merit scorn,
Forbear to mock. A woman changed am I.
Us more than gold, or jewels, doth adorn
A lowly heart and meek humility.
I learned this lesson, if I learned it late,
And penitent in soul doth pardon buy."

Quoth I, "Sweet Madam, born to high estate,
I love not aught in malice to set down,
Nor magnify the foibles of the great
To bring him to the level of the clown.
Ah! gentle lady, we be sinners all.
Yet Heaven upon us doth more smile than frown.
And the Great Shepherd will again recall
Into the fold each lost and erring sheep.
His arm upholdeth, when we seem to fall.
His mercy vast is as the boundless deep.
What God hath promised, he will not deny,
But keep, and more than in the letter keep."

Said our adieux, my lady fair and I
Our journey, by the woodland path, pursue.
Inlacing leaves, above, form arches high.
Crimson, and gold, and intermingled blue,
Spring, prodigal, from out the tawny ground,
Sweet-scented flowrets, beautiful of hue.
My footfall maketh, as I walk, no sound.
Silent, we move together, side by side.

All the wild creatures of the wood flock round.
For they fear nothing. Bird and beast abide.
Such entire trust she winneth from them all,
The spirit of that loved one, gentle-eyed.
A tree, the captain of the forest, tall,
Huge girthed, with mighty limbs, in a clear space,
Standeth in strength, alone, majestical.
Beneath lounge Bedford of the war-worn face,
Whose death restored France to be French again,
And Talbot, victor in a thousand frays,
A noble soldier, chivalrous in vain,
So jarring faction made his conduct nought,
Betrayed to foes, delivered to be slain,
Great deeds at arms, heroical, he wrought,
A lion, by the hunters brought to bay,
Scorning to flee, he perished where he fought.
Fair words of greeting the two barons say:
"Oh thou, permitted to behold us, where
We sojourn spirits! Child of other day,
Who, visitant awhile, now breath'st this air,
And privileged dost view thine after rest,
To share with us this heritage we share,
When thy sun sink into the golden west.
To the true knight, as his own brother, dear,
As one, who suckled at the selfsame breast,
The God-taught bard, mellifluous and clear.
Prithee, sweet Sir, of thy sweet courtesy,
Grant us the music of thy lips to hear—
In song thou with the nightingale dost vie—
Some true love ditty, with its joy and pain,
Or chanson of soul-stirring chivalry."

I sang of Sinon's fraud, and Troya's bane,
The Wooden Horse, within whose fateful womb
Lurked armoured knights, of Priam's ended reign,
Of baleful Pyrrhus, with the snow-white plume,
Aiming with caitiff steel his felon blows,
That night, as dreadful as the dawn of doom.
Troy was and is not. Troy her tale doth close.

Her lurid death-flame reddened Helle's wave,
Sigeum's Point, and Ida's crest of snows.
Then burning Pergamus was Priam's grave.
Then young Corœbus perished, brave in vain,
For her, the promised maid, he might not save.
Then Hecuba, with all her daughter train,
Stood, weeping, by the fair Andromaché,
Captive and bound, before Minerva's fane,
To pass in long ships o'er the wine-dark sea,
Toward distant Argos, or Mycenæ town,
Despoiled of all, royal no more, nor free,
To bend the neck, to fear a mistress' frown,
To go, fetch water from a Grecian spring,
So suddenly from such great height cast down.

After I sang of the Dardanian king,
Upon his shoulders how his age-worn sire,
And household Lares he did, pious bring
Forth out of Ilium, perishing with fire.
I sang of Dido, how she loved and died,
Trilling her death-song on enkindled pyre.
Of wars and battles, by the Tiber side,
I sang, and Turnus how he fought and fell,
And to his rival left the lovely bride,
Lavinia, the maiden dowered well,
Of the great founders of the Julian race,
And the proud city, where the Romans dwell.

Great thanks they give, nor render grudging praise:
"Sweet are thy words, and pleasant is thy theme.
We, born in darkness of the ruder days,
Yet walked with Virgil, by the Mincian stream,
Though busy manhood left but little time
For idle fancies and poetic dream.
Oh! stringer of the pearls of metred rhyme,
Much thanks, sweet Sir, for thy much courtesy.
Lift thou thy head among thy peers sublime!
The Muse adjudge her coronal to thee,

And with her laurel cap thine honoured head,
And grant thee seisin of an endless fee!"

"Fair Lords, ye flatter with fair words," I said.
"But flatteries are but the devil's snare.
Gold still is gold, and lead is only lead,
Whatever fluent orator may swear.
If I be lead, or I be current gold,
Leave we to Time, the touch-stone, to declare."

In its green mantle did the wood enfold
Those stately peers. They stay behind. But I,
Adown the long path, with my lady strolled
To the far end, and glimpse of open sky,
With leisured steps, and, through an opened gate
We struck a road which doth in meadows lie
There I beheld, amid his lords of state,
The manly visage of the soldier king,
Whose youthful folly did so strangely mate
With full-grown wisdom. 'Twas a wondrous thing,
First self to master, then to master all.
Sometimes fair summer hath but cloudy spring.
The golden lilies did before him fall,
At Agincourt, upon Saint Crispin's day.
Not five-fold odds daunt him heroical,
Great Harry, terrible in war's array.
At morn, the Frenchmen came in braggart pride.
At eve, they melted as the snow away.
In that great carnage knight and noble died.
Each English yeoman, with his twanging yew,
Spread feathered death, and his notched arrows plied.
The tale is old, but it is ever new,
Rash numbers tend to fond security.
But Fortune friend is of the handier few.

Now others join them to this company,
Old John of Gaunt, and his aspiring son;
The Percies, and their northern chivalry;
Owen Glendower, of subtle web well spun;
And Mortimer, unto the crown too near,

By violent hand unscrupulously won.
His mind is careful. He is full of fear,
Who sit, usurper, on a giddy throne,
Conscious within, he hath no title clear;
For such example by his act is shown,
His coadjutors imitate his guile,
And justify their treason by his own.
Goods, wrongly gotten, in a little while,
As fairy money, turn to withered leaves.
Then doth the devil smile his baleful smile
At the tricked trickster, whom his hope deceives.
God doth not sleep, although he seem to sleep.
The sinner snared is in the net he weaves.
In tears of blood shall mourning England weep
Him set upon by hireling hands, and slain,
At Pontefract, within the guarded keep,
When host meet host upon Saint Alban's plain,
Or terribly the trump, at Towton, peal
To many souls the signal of their bane.
But bitter enmities and harmful steel
Are laid aside in the fair spirit-land.
Old wrongs are purged, nor former feud they feel.
There, side by side, unquarrelsome, they stand;
Unto whom, passing, I obeisance made,
When called Glendower, with accent of command:
"Thou, that in realm of shadows, art no shade,
Come hither, and we twain will converse hold,
For, Sir, thy sires beyond the Severn stayed,
When the Red Dragon reared its bannered fold.
Saxon and Cymry, both be joined in one,
One law, one nation, by one king controlled.
God curse the traitors, who would counter run,
And from tied faggot filch one stick away!
God it compact in perfect unison!"

"Great chief, and patriot of a bygone day,"
I said, "I boast not to be highly born,
Nor, on false shield, false quarterings display,
As the vain fowl, which would itself adorn

With peacock plumes, and was the common mock,
When off its back was the stolen finery torn.
Yet am I graft of a Silurian stock,
Though, since, transplanted into Logrian land,
We grow no longer on our native rock.
Betwixt the little and the great we stand,
Not high, not low, but keep the golden mean,
Though gold, elusive, slippeth from our hand.
Where others reap, we be content to glean.
Me the Pierides have marked their own.
Sorrow and Love my housefellows have been."

"Yet shall the future for the past atone.
Fear not," he said. "Rejoicing, go thy way.
Shuffle the cards. Be patient. Make no moan.
Fortune will smile upon another day.
Grey Taliesin, with the laurel crowned,
Shall know thee master when on harp thou play,
And many minstrels, of old time renowned,
Hail thee their brother of the bardic race.
Lovers and gentle ladies, flocking round,
Well pleased shall listen to thy dulcet lays.
Soon with the dead the living will combine
To do thee homage, and to wreathe with bays."
Such speech he used, but Cymrian lips, in fine,
Love more to flatter than plain truths to say.
They count him poet, who has writ one line.
Their words are counters compliment to pay.
Largely he spake. If he spake verity,
Time will be judge. But judgment hath delay.

So we took leave. Then to my guide said I,
When now, mayhap, we had a half-mile gone,
In a green vale, where a brook murmured by:
"Sweet lady, such as have but little done,
Who lived their lives, and unremembered died,
Not born to greatness, nor who greatness won,
In world of spirits, where do such reside?
Doth the grave hold, in its unkind embrace,

These still, until the resurrection tide,
That were but cumberers upon earth's face,
That ate, and drank, and toiled their toil, and passed,
And left behind them such a little trace?"

She smiled: "My brother, most in this contrast
The two worlds, that this world is orderly,
And free from the confusion of the last.
Though Judgment hath not yet finality,
In part the wheat and tares are separate,
E'en if the green still mingle with the dry.
Like seeks to like, great draweth near to great,
And common souls to souls of common men.
Each keepeth company with its true mate,
Eagle with eagle, wren with weak-winged wren.
Think, how the spirit world is manifold.
I but one ward have opened to thy ken.
Wilt thou the nameless multitude behold?
These also, sweet friend, I have power to show,
Though their base metal vie not with our gold."
Then, pausing, she did flutter, to and fro,
Gently the feathered plumage of her fan:
"In name of Him, above, around, below,
In whom we live, Parent and Friend of man,
By whom the million stars, harmonious, wheel,
Fixed in their orbit, who did Cosmos plan."
Speaking such solemn words, she did unseal
The parcel blindness on mine eyes which lay.
I look upon another Commonweal.
There greet I some, whom, in their living day,
I knew, and I converse with many there.
What boot to name them? They have passed away.
And few remember them, what men they were.
They died, their actions and their names forgot.
In the great world they had so little share.
Empaled their lives within so small a plot.
They rest now with oblivion in the grave,
Yet not unhappy. Bettered is their lot.
They have such things as they desire to have.

For them the struggle, and the sordid care,
Is o'er, the thought to gather and to save,
To heap up riches for a spendthrift heir,
Or worse, do battle with the wolf at door,
And pine with hunger on a diet spare.
Their wish is theirs. How should they covet more,
Who never would ascend the hill divine,
Nor, borne aloft on eagle pinions, soar
With eyes undazzled by the rays that shine?
Earthy their thoughts, for they were born of earth,
Nor loved the children of the Sacred Nine.
Their homely virtues have a sterling worth,
Yet, tinged with rawness, have no power to please.
Too rough their voices, and too loud their mirth.
Amid the great, they seem but ill at ease.
But now, in death, they separated are.
These chill not those, nor do those jostle these.
Ended with life is life's continual jar.
Invisible, except to their own kind,
Their haunts are neighbour, yet, though near, are far.
Earth's face, I said, is as an onion rind.
Each peel, beneath it, hath an under peel.
So many worlds within one world we find.

But Aurea spake : " Minutes on minutes steal.
For thee, my brother, time hath no delay.
As a just merchant with thy moments deal.
Put them to use, nor fritter them away.
Long is the road from hence to Camelot,
Which we must travel ere to-morrow day."

My lady motioned, and clear light did blot
The thousand phantom figures, that stood round.
They vanished, and mine eye beheld them not.
Save Aurea's self, beside me, none was found.
With quickened step, we twain, together, hied
Toward a near hillock, which seven beech trees crowned.
Then I : " Sweet Madam, and my loving guide,
My spirit's sister, when the body die,

And we be passed unto the further side,
May one, or not, those other souls descry,
Or doth it sunder from our kith and kin,
To be by merit lift to height more high?"

Quoth she: "My brother, so to think were sin.
We can, at will, be present to their eyes,
Though this our bar they may not pass within.
Save, when the sun on All Souls' morning rise,
All souls are visible, till set of sun,
To soul divested of the body's guise.
Then we may change word with each glorious one,
May listen to shrill Sappho's burning lay,
And the sweet harpings of Anacreon,
Or hearken to the things wise Plato say,
Or talk with Cæsar, or with Cicero.
Such privilege we have on All Souls' Day."

Thus talking, forward on our way we go,
And the green knoll, with tardier foot, ascend.
By this the sun is in the heaven grown low,
And longer shadows from the trees extend.
There walketh Chaucer, in the sevenfold shade,
Beside him Gower, his known, familiar, friend.
To the great bard I low obeisance made.
Then he: "My brother, who hast leave to tread
Our spirit realm, by this sweet spirit's aid,
We give thee greeting, in the world of dead.
May thy work prosper, and thy name be known!
The Muse hath laurel for her minion's head."

"Great Sir," I said, "whose hand hath, picturing, shown
Our motherland in old Edwardian day,
Or then, when Richard filled less well the throne,
When Wycliffe preached, and Friars bore evil sway,
Clear fountain of our English poesy,
Of harp attuned first to vernacular lay,
Within the Tabard I have supped with thee,
And fared with thee along the Pilgrim road,

And, at thy witty jests, laughed merrily,
Though somewhat for our nicer ears too broad,
For blushing ladies and for babes unmeet,
And lightened with thy verse my sorrow's load.
Ah yes! And I have found the story sweet
Of Troilus and Cressid, that light love,
Whose tears were fleeter than her smiles were fleet.
At lovers' perjuries, they say, laughs Jove.
Yet Troilus, that true and perfect knight,
From such a lode-star how could lady rove?"

"If praise with praise 'tis seemly to requite,"
Said Chaucer, "who doth usance add to praise,
'Tis fear, lest be deemed a flatterer quite,
That hath an object in the siege he lays.
In troth, I know, Sir, I have written well,
And reared a monument that time outstays.
It doth not need another voice should tell,
That frosts of winter have not marred my bloom.
On Mount Parnassus, set aloft, I dwell,
And mock at death and the forgetful tomb,
Who did enrich my Saxon tapestry
With woven sweetness from Boccaccio's loom."

Then spake my mistress: "Hear thy handmaid's plea,
For gentle ladies should not vainly sue.
First of our poets, we have need of thee.
Thou holdest in thine hands the master clue,
That shall conduct to Camelot, the fair,
Whither we wend, to look for tidings new.
Great Sir, thy wit is able to declare,
How to the towers of vanished Camelot
Path may be found, and we find entrance there."

He said: "Sweet lady, well, in truth, I wot
The road, and will a chariot purvey
To bear ye thither, if he tremble not
At the winged coursers, which devour the way,
Fire-breathing griffins, terrible to view,
Yet withal gentle. With them child might play."

"So many wonders in this land ensue,
Master," I said, "that wonder-proof am I.
Oh! deem me not of the white-livered crew.
If worst be worst, a man can only die.
And what is death but change to better state?
God ruleth all, and God rules lovingly."

"Who fears not fate doth overmaster fate,"
He said, and led us down the green hill-side,
To where, beneath, did a fair chariot wait,
At a fair cross-way, where the roads divide.
Griffins, a wingéd pair, breathing fierce flame,
Stood, yoked in harness to that car of pride.
"Mount, gentle Sir, and this belovéd dame,"
Said Geoffrey Chaucer. "Kind Heaven speed your way!
Earth crown thy merit with enduring fame!
The world is altered since my living day,
In part for better, but in more for worse.
So much doth olden chivalry decay.
The cit is knighted for his length of purse.
The tradesman dealeth in adulterate wares.
Ye poets rhyme, but who doth read your verse?
Men have but leisure for their own affairs,
To spend in pleasure what by toil they gain.
The general weal, no, that is none of theirs.
Class wars with class, and Wisdom calls in vain.
The very farm-hands fly the country-side,
To herd with squalor in a city lane."

"May God," I said, "good remedy provide!
The fault is, men are ignorant and blind,
Too narrow-souled to have an outlook wide.
The common sort have such a little mind.
They are as men, that in a mirror gaze
Upon themselves, and catch no glimpse behind.
But, Sir, adieu! We sever here our ways.
Great my delight to have held talk with thee,
And looked on the presentment of thy face."

I climbed the car. Aurea took seat by me.
In her gloved hand she gathered either rein.
Then, at a word, the winged beasts eagerly
Sprang forward, with the burden of the wain;
Swifter than eagles, through the hurtling air,
By hill, by valley, and by broad champaign,
By planted orchard, and by garden fair,
E'en to the gate of Camelot the strong
They sped, and halted, voluntary, there.
But, at that sight, the citizens 'gan throng,
Whom Aurea bade: "Your portal open wide
Unto the minstrel, who hath gift of song.
Account him kinsman of your blood allied,
Well worthy to be Taliesin's heir,
Erst harper in King Urien's halls of pride."

"Hail to the bard! Hail to his lady fair!"
They say, and open, and we pass within.
But in the city sounds of wailing are,
And cries of women, and a confused din,
Whereat I marvel. By the steep, strait, way
We mount, and upward to the palace win.
A knight there lolleth, betwixt grave and gay.
"Sweet Sir," he saith, "I recognise thee well.
As to myself, I boast not, when I say,
I did my devoir, and I knightly fell,
Of good Sir Launcelot the sister's son,
Ector de Maris, of whom many tell."

"For, Sir, thy course was gloriously run,"
I said, "and dying thou didst laud obtain.
Thy life was busy. Now thy rest is won.
Didst not thou die, when many fell down slain,
Cheering thy comrades, fighting to the last,
Set in the breach, when the strong town was ta'en?
All these things happened at a time long past.
Cymrian and Saxon, now one realm are we,
Joined in an Empire more than Rome's was vast.
Ye were the golden flower of chivalry,

The seemliest fellowship the world hath seen,
The Table Round, or Time shall ever see.
But, Sir, I travel in a land, I ween,
The which I know not, nor its ways I know,
Where never mortal visitant hath been,
Who to the world have privilege to show
The laws and customs of the mediate state,
Unfixed as yet for blessedness or woe.
But here without, in vestibule, we wait.
Have we the power to pass yon inner door?
Or poets here do ye so meanly rate,
As keep them, amid grooms, on outer floor?
For I would enter, if my meed seem meet,
A simple gentleman—I claim no more."

"Sweet Sir, but unto thee the highest seat,"
He said, "and lodging in the fairest room!
We love the minstrel, as he come, to greet.
We love the weaver of the fairy loom,
Yea, such as bringeth us in hand a flower,
That did in garden of the Graces bloom."
Then many ladies issue from a tower,
Who by the hand my gentle lady take,
And lead her with them to their silk-hung bower.
"Farewell! sweet brother, till the morn awake,"
She turned, and said, and laughing went her way,
The dust of travel from her robes to shake.
"Sir," said Sir Ector, "but for thee we stay.
By now the supper on the board is set,
And for thy company the barons pray."

"Sir, in the world of spirits, I have met,"
Quoth I, "much kindness. Poorly words requite
For deeds, and debtor I augment my debt."

"Aye open to the minstrel and the knight
Should be the palaces of kings," quoth he.
"'Tis self to wrong to dare the Muse to slight,
Himself he cheateth of a golden fee;
For resteth on the point of ebon pen

Our dull oblivion, or long memory."
This said, through bowing lines of waiting men,
Inward he led me to the banquet hall,
Where, pictured on the storied slabs, I ken
Old Priam's town, its leaguer, and its fall,
Here the white tents of the far-gathered host,
There the proud city's high embattled wall.

Here doth the youthful Troilus accost
The wanton Cressid, in a garden fair,
Smooth Cressid, lightly won, as lightly lost.
She vowed sweet vows, but what are vows but air
To such? Their breath of life is coquetry.
They swear but falsely. They themselves forswear.

There, 'mid the Grecian tents, with sidelong eye,
She glanceth at the comely Diomed,
Before the tear upon her cheek be dry,
The tear she parting from her true-love shed.
Oh! woman of so weak, inconstant, mind,
Should out of sight be from remembrance fled?
Lo! she to Grecian Diomed is kind.
Her servant he, who doth her token wear.
But Troilus, the Troyan wall behind,
Aye tosseth, wakeful, on his couch of care,
And museth upon Cressid's winsome face,
But winsome Cressid is more false than fair.
Yet, Diomed, from love's so soft embrace,
Troy's youngest hope, his naked steel in hand,
Will wake thee, for his life he little weighs.
Who may the tempest of his blows withstand?
For trust misplaced is as the gate of hell.
Death sitteth on the slighted lover's brand.
Thy wrong shall ring of many Greeks the knell.
See, comely Diomed, thy coat be proof.
With thy strong right hand look thou keep thee well.

Lo! here, the noblest of the kings, aloof,
Is walking on the beach of the loud sea.

Upon the gilded domes, and well-tiled roof,
Of Priam's palace, from afar, looks he,
'Neath which, soft cheek upon her pillow laid,
The child Polyxena, not fancy free,
Of young love, stirring in her breast, afraid,
Dreameth, belike, she hath donned bridal veil,
And blusheth, as at thought unmeet for maid.

Lo! here do banners dance. Here men in mail,
In shock of battle, meet on open plain.
Brave men do doughty deeds, and cowards quail,
And many souls are summoned to their bane.
See, where the dreadful Sagittary ply
His twanging bow, and cloth-yard arrows rain.
The feathered cane-shafts speed so forcefully,
Through shield, through hauberk, as through cloth, they go.
Aloud he shouteth with discordant cry,
At every hit, as some proud head fall low,
Half man, half monster, and of brutish kind,
He striketh terror in the stoutest foe.

Lo! here, the maiden of the manly mind,
Whom to her death her courage did betray,
Penthesilea, Queen of Orient Ind,
Hath led her Amazons to battle fray,
And dared to combat with the matchless one,
Who babe upon the breast of Thetis lay.
Here warreth Hector. Here the Grecians run,
Or, beaten to their trenches, hardly stand.
Here, stiff and stark, is laid Menœtius son,
Enriching with red blood the Mysian strand.
Then rose a shout from the glad walls of Troy,
When strong Patroclus fell by Hector's hand.
There rageth Troilus, the beardless boy,
A second Hector, and of equal deed,
To him his life is an unvalued toy,
Nor gentle pity with him more doth plead.
He crieth: Havock! Loose the dogs of war!
The malison of Heaven on that curst breed!

But ah! great Hector is a setting star.
His steps the wily Myrmidons ensue.
At vantage taken, all his friends afar,
With cruel steel they pierce him through and through.
Weep, oh Andromaché, thy husband weep!
Your Hector's fall, ye Troyan maidens, rue!
For now doth Hector sleep the last long sleep.
His strong right arm did Pergamus uphold.
His sword from scabbard nevermore shall leap.
The truest knight of any knight of old,
His memory doth not with the years grow stale,
What though his deeds by enemy be told.

Yet Grecian might too weak is to prevail.
Still Troya stood. And sweet is halcyon peace.
They yearn to handle oar, to spread the sail,
And look again on the dear land of Greece.
The Lion-heart and Priam's daughter fair
Shall join their hands, and the long discord cease.
But Paris, in his heart, is full of care.
Shall Argive Helen be restored, or no?
He layeth, treacherous, an evil snare.
Up the long street the marriage pomp moves slow.
Girls, crowned with roses, robed in seemly white,
With dancing step, and clash of cymbals, go.
"Hymen, oh Hymen, hasten on thy night!"
They sing. Polyxena, the lovely bride,
Half glad, half tremulous in shy affright,
Behind her veil doth her sweet blushes hide,
Amid her sisters and her maiden train.
Ah! never shall her nuptial knot be tied.
The son of Thetis draweth to his bane.
The fateful arrow from the bow is sped.
And great Achilles, in his pride, falls slain.
God taketh vengeance for blood foully shed.
When Troy be ta'en, and all at mercy stand,
Stern retribution for his father dead
Will baleful Pyrrhus wreak with smoking brand.

Not hoary hairs, nor women's tears, will stay
His cruel wrath, or check his furious hand.

Yonder is Paris, hurten from the fray,
On litter borne to sad Œnoné's bower,
The nymph he loved, but only to betray;
Again he seeketh her in dying hour.
She with a kiss doth his forgiveness seal,
But, skilled in leech-craft, hath too little power
His deadly stroke with medicines to heal.
The ruddy life-drops, stayed, no longer run
Their course, but cold, about the heart, congeal.
His last he looketh on the setting sun.
She doth but wait to close those glazing eyes.
She will rejoin him, when this task is done,
She saith, and mingleth all her speech with sighs.
Of the fair Greek he taketh thought no more,
But pillowed on Œnoné's lap he dies.

At the far end, and opposite the door,
A fair large painting, in distemper wrought,
Stretched to the ceiling from the daïs floor.
There perjured Sinon, before Priam brought,
Did of his hearers steal the wit away.
The Wooden Horse, with their own ruin fraught,
The gift, that did their enemies purvey,
They frenzied hale within the walls of Troy.
Each man unto the cable hand doth lay.
They shout aloud, in their insensate joy,
And breach the rondure of the well-built wall,
The wall that kept them from their foes' annoy.
Engine of death that monster they instal.
What strong Pelides by his good right hand
Might not, by her own act doth Ilium fall.

'Tis a fair hall, by master-builder planned,
With gilded bosses in a ceiling fair.
Rush-strewn the floor. Great oaken tables stand,
This side and that, and lighted sconces flare.

Within are gathered many squires and knights.
These turn and greet me with a reverent air:
"Hail to the minstrel, who the soul delights!
Hail to the bard! He hath admittance free.
Hail to the pen, with which God's finger writes!
Hail to the Maker, for God's deed doth he!
Hail to the stringer of the clear-toned lyre,
Who draweth from the shell sweet rhapsody!"

I was abashed. But then a gentle squire
Said: "Sir, upon the daïs take thy place.
So the king biddeth. So the lords desire.
Poor is the banquet, save the Muse show grace.
For soldier's cloak is not as scholar's gown.
The minstrel's harp a monarch's crown outweighs."
Thus urged, in honoured seat I sate me down,
Doubting, amazed, I should be set so high,
That had, on earth, achieved such scant renown.
The knight, unto the blood of Launcelot nigh,
Sate next me. Heaped the board with viands fair.
And the cups circle. Yet, methought, did lie
A shadow, as of apprehensive care,
Upon the guests, and the talk died away.
As men, who for some adverse stroke prepare,
And fear it coming, at the dawn of day,
They seem. Their laughter hath a hollow sound,
Their cheeks are blanched, their lips are ashen grey.

CANTO VI

I TURNED me to the knight Armorican.
Quoth I, "Sir knight, what manner ghosts are these,
That eat, in fashion of the living man,
And crush the wine-cup, with mind ill at ease?
What doleful hap, or overhanging dread,
Hath tuned their music to such minor keys?"

"Our lot is fixed in an enchanted stead,
We children born of old Romance," said he.
"We be not living, and we scarce be dead.
Betwixt the living and the dead are we.
Ours is the region, where the Brownie dwell,
And unsubstantial realm of Faërie.
When Camelot, the royal city, fell,
These blenched at death, and showed a coward fe
Upon whom, after, lay this glamour spell,
As they hold revel, doth a sword appear,
As erst, unto the Grecian Damocles,
Suspended o'er them by a cobweb mere.
The craven heart, whose foot in battle flees,
He dieth oft, who dreadeth once to die.
In every bush an enemy he sees.
These timid burghers have no power to fly.
They deem a host beleaguereth their gate,
And that an onslaught of their foes is nigh.
They shrink, as women, from impending fate.
Brave men die once, and suffer death no more.

What matter when 'tis, whether soon or late?
We change not with it, though we change our shore.
Ought not the soldier, when his captain call
To ford the river, with good heart pass o'er?"

"Sir," quoth I, "but, if these be cowards all,
Whence cometh it thou bear them company?
Thou didst not crouch behind a fortress wall,
When trumpet blared, and pealed the slogan cry.
Thy death did e'en thine enemies commend.
He dieth well who dieth soldierly."

"Fair friend," he said, "permit, I call thee friend,
With these base losels part nor lot have we.
Year after year, we customary wend
To the glad Isle, that jewel of the sea,
Where, with his intimates, our Liege-lord dwell,
To kiss his hand, and stoop the vassal knee.
The legendary tale thou knowest well,
The sacred Quest of the mysterious Grail;
The wonders, that in Sarras town befell;
Sir Galahad, Sir Bors, Sir Percivale,
The three, who to the spiritual place
Won access, and the many, who did fail.
The Grail hath vanished. It hath left no trace.
In depth of forest it is seen no more.
God did, in anger, turn aside his face,
Nor walk among us, as he walked before.
Stiff-necked, rebellious, men of hasty deed,
We tired his patience, though he long forebore.
For many bulls fed in a pleasant mead,
Some black, some speckled, only three were white,
A parable to such as truly read.
Lo! taken upward from our longing sight,
The mystic chalice, the life-dripping spear,
So full of sweetness, if we view aright,
Merge, veiled in darkness of a light too clear,
Prologue, significant of coming bane,
The wail of anguish and the shriek of fear.

Then was the might of Launcelot proved vain,
That constant lover, but disloyal friend.
God him assoil! He did his knighthood stain.
Through his default our summer day had end.
Else had not Mordred with the powers of hell
So leagued him. Dolorous the path he wend.
Then pealed the trumpet with a long stern swell.
Briton with Briton, all the live-long day,
Strove. Death reaped harvest. In their ranks they fell,
As fall, before the scythe, the swathes of hay;
Until, at Camlan, by the War-god's ford,
The sword, through weariness, forgot to slay.
With staring eyes lay the grim rebel lord,
Beneath the stars, on that ensanguined plain,
By the sharp spear his bosom gashed and gored.
He lost himself who would an empire gain.
But, in her gilded barge, Fay Morgan bore
Death-stricken Arthur, from his earthly reign,
King once, king, peradventure, yet once more,
To be recovered of his grievous wound
In fair Avilion, the guarded shore.

But oh! that Christened men, on Christened ground,
A civil warfare should, uncivil wage,
They, who should champions of the truth be found,
When Antichrist against God's children rage,
And rooting wild-boars spoil the goodly vine,
And knavish foxes mar Christ's heritage.
The kingliest king of our most kingly line,
Hero, Pendragon, thunderbolt of war,
He doth, amid the dead, as Hesper shine,
Who once 'mid living men, was morning-star.
Thence come I, from the land Avilion,
Toward the fair region, where my kinsfolk are.

We, Breton knights, our earthly travail done,
Who did aloof, the kith of Launcelot, stand,
When Arthur warred, and his own sister's son,
Our haunt is in the wood Broceliande,
Where viewless bells chime musical, at e'en

Swayed by the touch of immaterial hand.
There tricksy fairies, at their cups, are seen.
Their cups are acorn cups, when they carouse,
The wee folk, habited in jerkin green.
The slattern house-wife, who keep ill her house,
These pinch, with grievous pinches, black and blue.
These plague the ploughman, if awry he ploughs.
But such, as diligent their task ensue,
They love. The maiden at her spinning-wheel
They help, or goodwife, when she churn or brew.
For these the mistress, if she justly deal,
In ingle corner will a sip of ale
Put forth, and bannock baked of barley meal.
Ye view them not in depth of bosky dale.
Your human eyes see not as spirits see.
Now Oberon and his Titania fail.
Yet fulfilled was the world of Faërie,
When Arthur reigned, and all his Table Round
In jingling harness rode, armed cap-a-pie,
And splintered spear, and rival bore to ground,
'Fore ladies' eyes, upon the listed green,
Or chased the hart with horse and horn and hound.
Lodged in the fair Avilion, I ween,
At High Feast of the Blessed Trinity,
To-night I visit the familiar scene,
Where rose my birth-sun on new year, pardie!
My work was ended, and I sank to sleep,
I drank the cup that was presented me,
Who, set as watchdog o'er the seely sheep,
Fell fighting, when the were-wolf won the hold,
Slain in the bastion I had sworn to keep."

Ector de Maris, the good knight and bold,
Spake thus. I listened, with attentive ear,
To him whose knell with Camelot's was knolled.
The rest I name not, neither prince nor peer.
What boot to name them? For their names are dead.
The coward's ending is oblivion mere.
But the pale phantom, who wore crown on head,

Upon me gazing with lack-lustre eyes,
Spake: "Sir, if with us thou have broken bread,
And taken sup, some merry thought devise.
As silly sheep, we bleat in sore dismay,
Who look, mayhap, to see the sun arise,
But ere it set, and evening mist loom grey,
The wolf will wanton in the broken fold.
For we, dear God! are but the spoiler's prey,
Dumb sheep, unto the cruel butcher sold,
We fear, and feeble cannot shun our fate.
The knife is whetted. All our days are told.
The foe is pitiless, his wrath how great!
The lofty city shall in ruin lie.
The joyous city shall lie desolate."

Then cried they all with lamentable cry:
"Woe! woe! for Camelot shall fall, shall fall,
The virgin city, the tower builded high."
But the king checked them: "When they climb the wall,
Then will be time to beat upon the breast.
Honey to-night let mingle with the gall.
Sweet bard, show pity! Calm our sad unrest!
Use harp, and harping soothe our troubled cheer.
And ye, give audience to this laurelled guest."

Then all were silent, and lent listening ear.
"Of Troyan Brût, and his adventurous crew,"
I sang, "and Helenus, that soothfast seer,
By dim Dodona's oak, the mind who knew
Of the great Gods. He could interpret well
The meaning of the bird, and gather clue
From smoking entrail, what each sign foretell.
His reverend locks with priestly fillet crowned,
To the bold youth, in dim Dodona's dell,
His lips the coming destinies unwound:
Further than yet did mariner explore,
'Yond the closed seas, and Hercules his bound,
Past Gades rock, and the Biscayan shore,
Is set an Isle, beneath the circling Wain.

Gods name it Albion. Plenty there doth pour
From her full horn. Queen of the sapphire main,
At her white feet, the laughing billows play.
Thy sword this goodly heritage shall gain.
It is a garden of the Gods, men say,
It is a land of orchard, and of sward,
And obscure forest, dim at noon of day.
Giants now hold it, race of Heaven abhorred.
No treaties bind them. They no laws revere.
Brutish, inhuman, they obey no lord.
Altar, nor temple, to the Gods they rear.
Unsocial, each his lowing herd they tend,
Apart, in forest, or in reedy mere.
These with Corineus, whom Jove will send
To be the partner of thy daring way,
Smite, do not pity, till thou make full end.
The Gods are with you. Seize upon the prey.
Only by labour look repose to find.
For halcyon Peace the child is of affray.
Here shall arise, with auspices more kind,
A Troy, more lasting than the Troy of old,
To her the sceptre of Memnonian Ind,
And the swart Ethiop, and the Libyan wold,
Unto her merchants shall bring merchandise,
Jewels and silk, sweet spiceries and gold.
Her masts shall spread, a forest in men's eyes,
Upon the broad back of the flowing Thames,
By where Lud's buildings mount up toward the skies.
Ye toward offspring of proud Phrygian dames,
Unmeet the blot of servitude to share,
Within whose breasts the soul of Hector flames,
Break ye this yoke, this iron yoke, ye wear.
Before your eyes is set an unlatched door.
The world is open to the men who dare.
Hoist ye the sail. Handle the dripping oar.
Commit your fortunes to the following wind.
Pursue your journey. The road lies afore,
Whither your star lead. Cast no glance behind.
Turn bill and reaping-hook to spear and brand.

For God is helper to the stayed in mind.
He said, and blessed them with uplifted hand.
Then Troyan Brût, and his companions true,
Took heart, built ships, and from the Graian land,
When pleasant Spring did her sweet flowers renew,
Lightly set sail—each augury was fair—
West and by south, athwart the Terrene blue.
They made the Ausonian land, and anchored there.
In old tradition, they dwell, hauntingly,
In the rough Bruttian glens and mountains bare.

"They tempt the perils of the Sicil sea,
And narrows of the Strait, where bandogs bay,
Round Scylla's skirts and sea-weed drapery.
Opposed Charybdis doth her ambush lay.
'Twixt that ill rock and this wild, whirling, wave,
Guard, heedful pilot, well the middle way.
On starboard side the baffled hell-hounds rave.
To port the billows of the maelstrom boil.
But dangers daunt not the determined brave,
And skilful hardihood is peril's foil.
To call of boatswain, and with rhythmic oar,
They've won the passage with laborious toil.

"They viewed the Shepherd on the grassy shore,
One-eyed, a monster, of unmeasured height,
A pine uprooted for his staff he bore.
Uncouth flockmaster, yet he hath delight
In his fat wethers, and his ewes, that feed
On the green, sloping, meadow, full in sight.
Unto his lips he setteth pipe of reed,
Wherefrom he music of a barbarous strain
Evoketh. He, at eve, will homeward lead
His flock, and, at the dawn, bring forth again
His flock to pasture. Thus he, day by day,
From early primrose, till the leaf show stain.

"The Siren daughters of the lonely bay
Begin their sweet song from the jagged cave:

Oh ye, who wander such a weary way,
Ye know not whither, wherefore toil and slave?
Simple, ye fare forth, on a wild-goose quest,
Afar to purchase what, at home, men have.
Labour is hardship, sweet is tranquil rest.
In lap of ladies it is sweet to lie,
And head to pillow on a soft warm breast.
Oh! better so, than the rude oar to ply,
Storm-tossed to voyage on an endless main,
To the world's bourne and touch of meeting sky.
All ye desire, ye wayfarers, to obtain,
Ease, hearts of women, store of worldly gear,
Is yours. Caress us, for our souls are fain.
A kindly welcome, Sirs, and smiling cheer,
We tender, proud to be your willing slaves.
Choose each his darling and his loving fere.
And we, the daughters of the laughing waves,
His handmaidens, will bring him cates and wine,
And show the wonders of our ocean caves,
And fill his hand with pearls and jewels fine,
While with the tresses of our perfumed hair
He toying fingers, at his will, entwine.
In silk and velvet he shall robe him fair
For leathern doublet and for iron mail,
And soft the couch our loving hands prepare,
Where he may rest him, till the morn prevail.
No weary watches he shall, tired, endure,
Nor haul upon the rope, nor trim the sail.
But to the dance the cithern shall allure.
We fill the beaker, and again refill,
Of anxious thought medicament and cure.
Hither, come hither! Forget all life's ill!
To the cool grotto, to the pleasant shade,
Where the wave sleepeth, and the winds are still.

" Brût laughed: *For Paris' sin enough is paid.*
The lips of harlots are a poison flower.
The man who toucheth them, his grave is made.
They die, who sleep within these witches' bower,

They ne'er shall look upon the rising sun.
Sweet words are spells. Malefic they have power.
Oh! souls of women, would ye labour shun?
Awake! Arouse you from lethargic sleep!
The wage is due not till the work be done.
Fear we the peril of the stormy deep?
Trust well the promise, that Apollo gave,
For well Apollo will his promise keep.
Onward, ye Teucrians, children of the brave,
The twanging of the weak, effeminate, lute
Is meeter for the hand of coward slave,
Than such as travel in the train of Brût.
More stirring music hath the clarion sound,
Than the vile tootling of a Lydian flute.
Look, men, upon these rotting hulks around,
And the bones bleaching on the cruel strand.
This beach is nothing but a charnel ground.
Not here, not here, ye view your promised land.
Be soldiers. Think, how ye wear sword at side.
Oh leave the spindle to the woman's hand.
These proffer love, but love to hell allied,
As foul within, as they without seem fair.
By craft of these have many seamen died.
They catch the tripping. They the fond ensnare.
The fool is taken in his own despite.
Ye, clearer-eyed, be circumspectly ware.

" They, who had listened, with a strange delight,
To the lewd promptings of the Siren's song,
Stirred by his words, for potent is the right,
And weak against it are the spells of wrong,
Cry : *Let the Destinies their course fulfil!*
Forward, oh forward, though the way be long.
We, servants of the Gods, obey their will;
And boldly steer for the Tartessian strand,
Past Tingis burgh, and Calpe's frowning hill,
And Gades, daughter of Sidonian land,
To where the citron and pomegranate glow,
And Baetis rolleth over golden sand.

" That simple folk nor guile, nor malice, know.
Man is their neighbour, all their thoughts are kind;
To the worn stranger courtesy they show,
Greeting him well with hospitable mind,
The shipman tossed upon the weary sea,
Bronzed by the sun, and battered by the wind.
At fall of leaf, when stripped the forest tree,
And hurricanoes rage, and waters boil,
Anchored in port, in safe tranquility,
Brût and his mariners have rest from toil,
And quaff full bumpers of benignant wine,
And supple their stiff joints with lissom oil.
Yet, unforgetful of their old design,
Soon as the winter, with its cold, is past,
And leaves put forth, and suns less wanly shine,
And Zephyr breath doth oust the Boreal blast,
They caulk the gaping seams, new cables weave,
New oars they fashion, and they step the mast,
With yo-heave-ho the bedded anchor heave,
Unfurl the mainsail to the kissing wind,
And with beaked prow the tumbling billows cleave.

" Left is the fair Hesperian coast behind
For surging eddies and Biscayan roar.
Now do the demons of the North unbind
The prisoned gusts. They ply laborious oar
To little purpose. They must make the land,
And seek the shelter of no friendly shore.
By Liger bank dwell men of heavy hand,
Big, grim of aspect, who nor reap, nor sow.
The god they worship is a naked brand.
They track the bison through the mountain snow;
In summer pasture lowing herds they tend;
To such the stranger is not guest, but foe.
From cot to cot, the Fiery Cross these send.
The clans are gathered ere the close of day.
Their spears they brandish, and their bows they bend.

"The Troyan ranks their Captain doth array,
Men few in number, of intrepid soul,
His palms he spreadeth, and his prayer doth pray:
Ye Gods, who lead us to the destined goal,
Be present with us in our peril's hour!
Let few be missing from our muster roll,
And edge of sword our enemies devour!
Then to his cohort: *Wielders of the brand,*
Inured with me to sunshine and to shower,
Quit you like men! If boldly ye withstand,
These come on quickly, but as quickly flee.
Their bond of union is a rope of sand.
They shout aloud, the rovers of the sea,
Bristling in arms, in serried close array,
Rank behind rank, in brazen panoply.
Backward and forward doth the combat sway.
With furious onset come the charging foe.
Shields clash on shields. Load upon load men lay.
Thrusting they thrust, and counter blow with blow.
Corineus, the knight of Aquitaine,
Hath laid the Dardan Peridor full low.
Great grief hath Brût, that Peridor is slain.
Let Aquitaine thereof make little boast.
The sword of Brût hath bit into the brain
Of Golfarie, the tyrant of that coast.
Down crashing, as a tempest-riven oak,
Fell Golfarie, the captain of that host.
Then Troy made onset, and her foes she broke.
They fled before her with the foot of deer,
To yield, as, vassals, to the stranger-yoke.

"Corineus leaned on his blood-dripping spear,
Nor went he backward, but in proud disdain
Collected stood. He showed no coward fear.
Unto whom Brût: *The will of God is plain.*
Submiss resign thee to the will of God.
My rule is balanced. 'Tis no tyrant reign.
Jove did entrust into my hands this rod.

One troop, one nation, in one league allied,
Whose childish foot, erewhile, by Simöis trod,
And such as water, at this broader tide,
High-mettled courser, by the moon-moved deep,
Just laws and equal I for each provide.

" Corineus answered : *So may God me keep,*
As I be faithful to the word I say !
Sir, at thy bidding shall from scabbard leap
This falchion. At thy feet I homage lay.
Betide me life, Sir, or betide me death,
Fearless I follow. Do thou point the way.

" Men rear an altar on the lonely heath,
A simple altar of the four-square sod,
Brût crown they monarch with the golden wreath,
And put into his hands the golden rod.
He giveth laws. All hearken and obey,
To them his voice is as the voice of God.

" *The cliffs of Albion are far away,*
Fertile the region of the fair Touraine,
Here let us build, and here continuing stay,
For rest is pleasant after long-borne pain,
To men awearied of the tossing sea ;
'Tis wearisome to view the same blue main ;
To tread the same deck is monotony :
They cry, forgetful of the promised land,
That dwells not in their blotted memory.
What ! have the Gods in vain their purpose planned ?
Not so. They to the Troyan send a dream :
Sleeper, awake. Perform our high command.
Beside the waters of a worthier stream
Shall the new towers of a new Ilium rise,
Where now the tall hart beareth antlered beam,
And from lone nest the sad-voiced bittern cries,
And foxes prowl. Child of Laomedon,
Pursue the course of thy true destinies.
Unto the voice of the Celestial One
Brût hearkened, and they launch their keels anew.

Hey, for the shores of sea-girt Albion,
Named of the Gods, pure pearl in sapphire blue!
Then spake Corineus, the stout of heart,
Of the strong arm, soul chivalrous and true:
Nor death, nor danger, shall us twain dispart.
Thither we follow, where thou take thy way,
Though, greatly venturous, thou trace the chart
Of extreme ocean, and from light of day,
Into the murk of the Cimmerian land
Lead on, and region, where the Fiend hath sway.

" Brût sware: *By the just Gods, and this right hand,*
And the good falchion, which at side I wear,
Whatso we win, by prowess, with the brand,
We will, as comrades, and as brothers, share.
Large is the land, and it hath ample room.
Salubrious is its sweet and pleasant air.
It is not vexed by hyperborean gloom.
The winter mild, nor heat in summer great.
Gay Flora weaveth in those fields her loom.
And apple-orchards bend beneath the weight
Of juicy pippins, till their boughs decline.
It is a garden, planted at heaven's gate.
By limpid waters graze well-favoured kine,
And dun deer leap within its greenwood glade,
The land the Gods have given me to be mine.

" Windborne, they sail. The Gods are present aid.
The waves are tranquil, and the winds are fair.
They cast their anchor. They their keels unlade,
Their watch-fires kindle, and their arms prepare.
The giant brood, as Alpine larch-tree tall,
Huge-limbed, misshapen, kerns with shaggy hair,
Hideous of aspect, armed with iron maul,
Movers of mountains, despicable race,
Hated of Heaven, so steeped in bitter gall,
Beyond God's pardon, or his power of grace,
These in the marish, or the tangled wood,
They set upon. Their soul no pity stays.

Corineus, by his great hardihood,
  Goëmagog, that hugeous bulk, o'erthrew.
  Crashing he fell, and wallowed in his blood,
Goëmagog, the vilest of that crew.
  Him, manfully, Corineus, face to face,
  And hand to hand, did battle with, and slew.
They share betwixt them what the sword purveys,
  Herds of sleek oxen, treasures of the mine.
  On fruited orchards they, delighted, gaze,
Of human labour that reveal no sign,
  Fair orchards, grafted by Celestial hand,
  Of growth spontaneous, and by Will divine.

" Corineus lord is of the Fair-horned Strand.
  His lot the garden of the rain-fed West,
  Where foaming milk-pails in cool dairy stand,
But cowslips gleam not on our Mother's breast,
  Nor listen men to voice of nightingale,
  But there the wild chough hath her kindly nest.
It is a land of hillock and of vale,
  Tree-bordered hedge-row, and deep winding lane,
  Of furzy common, and brown upland dale,
Of shining metals, hid in caverned vein,
  Land of fair women, and of warriors brave,
  Of jutting headland, and a twofold main.

" Where white swans glistened on the limpid wave
  Of flowing Thames, by the fair river-side,
  Brût built his city. There he hath his grave.
His children's children, in long after tide,
  Governed the nation, with recovered sway,
  When Tudor Henry led his Yorkist bride.

" Oh! ye, the children of the mediate day,
  Tread ye the path your fathers trod before?
  Their glory doth not with their bones decay.
Their acts remember, what they wrought of yore.
  Blench not, and scorn to bend the coward knee,
  Seed of their seed, whom Troyan mothers bore.

Ye fight with shadows. From a rush ye flee.
Revive your courage. Blush with honest shame.
Oh! bastard spirits, of what blood are ye?
Shall we your fathers, or your mothers, blame?
Yea! by the sword, that did, at Badon hill,
The furious White Horse, in its prancings, tame,
God's instrument his vengeance to fulfil,
When Arthur shouted to the charging line:
Slay. Take no captive. Give no quarter. Kill.
Sirs, recollect you! Cease this spaniel whine!
Put from you craven diffidence and fear.
Oh! let each British heart a Mars enshrine.
Death is a nettle with a poisoned spear,
If one approach it with a shrinking hand,
But grapple with it, and 'twill blunt appear.
To fall in battle for his motherland
The sweetest death is, that a man may die.
His blood is drunk not by the thirsting sand,
But mounteth upward to the starry sky.
His honours blossom in the poet's song.
His epitaph is graven durably.
Oh! fools and witless, ye to death belong.
For you the bitterness of death is past.
Your foes are phantoms. In yourselves be strong.
No trench about you no besiegers cast.
No battering engines shake your mouldering wall.
No trumpet soundeth, and no lines are massed.
Your fears are bugbears. They be nought at all.
Sirs, ye be frighted with a vain dismay.
He that is fallen need have no fear to fall.
Poor ghosts, wan spectres, ye have lived your day.
Know ye be dead. Again ye cannot die.
Hare-hearts, a straw your valour would outweigh."

Thus, harping on the harp, I, strenuous, try
To stir those dastards, with reproachful blame,
To manly thought, and aspiration high.
They blush, and conscious in themselves feel shame.
Their shadowy cloud and apprehensive dread

My burning lyre hath lit with nobler flame.
"Their camp is broken. All their host is fled,"
They cry. "So potent are thy words, pardie!
They can revise the statutes of the dead.
E'en as some wholesome medicines there be,
So bitter they the palate little please,
Yet make the sick whole of his malady.
As hellebore to the wrought brain bring ease,
The bracing tonic of thy mordant song.
The palsy, wherewith shook our feeble knees,
Is overpast, and we, the weak, grow strong.
Our ague chills are nursed to kindlier heat.
Our manhood is awake, that slept o'erlong."

The Shadow, who did fill the highest seat,
Spake further: "Is not this a real friend,
Who speaketh apt word from a mind discreet,
Who doth the worthy for his worth commend,
But outpour all the vial of his scorn
On heart that fainteth, and on knees that bend?
Now is self-trust, and confidence, reborn,
And a new epoch of our joy begun.
Our sable weed of penance is outworn.
For penance endeth, when its work is done.
And self-amendment is the golden key
By which the door of betterment is won.
When the wild graft show fruit of kindlier tree,
Though man forgive not, yet will God forget,
And of pure grace, grant absolution free.
Oh! friends, unto this stranger large our debt.
Then weave we crown of laurel for his hair.
In golden letters in our roll be set
His name, a freeman of our city fair.
The loving-cup let, after, circle round,
For it grows late. The stars true witness bear."

They hasted, and with laurel crown me crowned,
And did acclaim me with a loud acclaim:
"Lo! he, by whom our soul deliverance found,

Long may he live, and honoured be his name,
In golden letters, with a golden pen,
Inscribed upon the Calendar of Fame!"
The proudest moment of my life was then,
Made citizen of Camelot the fair,
Hailed by the spirits of those old-world men,
As worthy to be Taliesin's heir.
The loving-cup is borne the table round,
From left to right, spiced antidote of care,
Deep in whose depths, they said, lay sorrow drowned.
The feast is ended. I, with torches brought
To chamber, fall into a sleep profound.
Rich hangings, by the hands of ladies wrought
With needled stitches, showed a hunting scene,
Where, in a thicket, a wild-boar, methought,
Did brave the peril of the boar-spear keen.
Around him bay the hounds with furious bay,
Fierce-eyed, and grim, of formidable mien,
With side-long gashes, he doth rend and slay,
And the pack scatter, and their distance keep,
Yet hang about him, nor remit their prey.
Now spring they backward, now they forward leap.
With such a tapestry the walls were hung,
Within the chamber, where I lay asleep.

By the bird chorus, when the dawn is young,
Beneath my window, in the garden fair,
Their matin hymn amid the boughs is sung,
The cherry boughs, which red ripe cherries bear.
The paling shadows melt into the light,
The ruddy sun is manifest in air.
Yet still, upon the lowlands, fleecy white,
A fog, o'er the broad meadows, sea-like, lay.
Gleamed, as an islet, every rounded height
Above the waters of a land-locked bay.
Awakened by the song of birds from sleep,
My couch I spring from, and salute the day.
Upon the crown and summit of the steep
Is built the palace, whence mine eyes look down

On streets and alleys, up that mount which creep,
And the tiled roofs and closes of the town,
Within the circuit of her double walls,
With scarp, and counterscarp, and bastion frown,
Unto mine ear the voice of Aurea calls
From the fair pleasance, where, in beauty crowned,
She walk, and happy birds sing madrigals:
"What joy is like to joy of morning found,
When every rose-cup hold its drop of dew?
Up, brother, up! The sun hath kissed the ground,
And earth is freshest when the dawn is new.
Up, brother, up! Sleep is a sluggard thing.
And the day fleeteth, and its hours are few."
Under my casement, while she sweetly sing,
I don my raiment, and myself array,
Then hasten downward, where that child of spring,
Robed in her loveliness, sister of May,
Await my coming. Her I shyly greet,
In the fair garden, in the new-born day.
In a pleached arbour, wine and pleasant meat
Are set before me by a viewless hand.
And, strengthened in my soul by that I eat,
My guide I follow, at her signed command.
And many knights, and many ladies fair,
Conduct our footsteps to the river strand;
Through the thronged city, where, with joyous air,
Walked men and women, and young children played;
Through the broad portal, whose leaves open were;
By the fair causeway, that a king once made,
To the green meadow, and the wave-washed pier,
Where merchantmen, of old, did wares unlade.
The burghers, as I pass, with smiling cheer,
Say: "Hail! oh, Minstrel of the lyre divine,
Dear unto men, unto the Muses dear!
Oh! star, that last born in the heaven dost shine,
Thou dost the harp of Aneurin outdo,
And Taliesin's bays are less than thine,
By thee we live, we borrow hope anew,
Freed from the burden of o'ermastering dread,

And gather herb of grace for bitter rue.
At yester-even, our soul weighed as lead.
But now the garment of our sable woe
We fling aside, to deck ourselves instead
With festal mirth, our heart is lightened so.
Ought not his debt the debtor to repay,
Not less, but equal to the sum he owe?
Our minted hearts, in gratitude, we lay
Down at thy feet, and our thoughts follow thee,
If kindly wish have power to smooth rough way."

But we descend. The flower-enamelled lea
We traverse to the shelving, shingly, marge
Of, was it river, was it arm of sea?
Rideth upon the waves a seemly barge.
Three with crowned heads, each royally beseen,
I note, the midmost statelier and more large
Than her two sisters. Orange-striped and green
Her silken coats, her shoulders scarfed in vair.
Brown eyed and cherry-lipped, thoughtful her mien,
With arching eyebrows, and with red gold hair.
Time had no wrinkle on her forehead laid.
Age could not touch her, nor her bloom impair.
When she beheld us, she my lady prayed:
"Sweet, come on board. We tarry long for thee.
Aurea, dear sister, we have waiting stayed
For him thou bringest, and thyself, pardie!
Upon this Minstrel is bestowed such grace,
His eyes are open, he hath power to see
Things unpermitted to the vulgar gaze.
The veil is lifted from his living eyes.
He may hold talk with men of other days,
As some with books, and gather from the wise.
Both power to look upon the things unseen
He hath, and to reveal what hidden lies."

Aurea made answer to the brown-eyed Queen:
"Sister, our clock is neither fast, nor slow.
At stated hour, by this soft hand, I ween,

Upon the margin of yon liquid flow,
Punctual we stand. Take us on board. Then weigh
Your anchor, mariners, with yo-heave-ho."

"Adieu!" to those we leave behind we say.
And they, our escort, answer with "Adieu!"
But tide and time will suffer no delay.
We climb the deck. Instant they weigh, that crew,
The silver anchor, and we cleave the wave.
The cliffs go backward, and recede from view.
"Be fourth amongst us, and like honour have,"
Unto my lady said those ladies three.
So kind a welcome to my queen they gave,
And did to her such noble courtesy.
They set upon her brows a golden crown.
She sate, enthroned in her sweet royalty.
"For that thy loveliness exceed our own,
Thou flawless pearl of womanhood divine,"
They said, and kissed her. Each then sate her down.
But of those ladies none was like to mine.
I celebrate the four in praiseful song,
And graciously they gracious ear incline.

"To gentle ladies gentle thoughts belong.
Filled inly with all golden qualities,
Pure-souled, ye shun, intuitive, the wrong,
Mirror of God, wherein himself he sees,
Your lips approach him, than our lips, more near.
With heart more tender, ye bend holier knees.

"Oh! ye, whose outward loveliness appear,
Have ye not greater loveliness within,
Hallowed by her, who was the Mother dear
Of him, who, sinless, did redeem our sin?
Hence ladies, by the law of chivalry,
Are held in honour, as our Lady's kin.

"Queen of the honeyed lip and seeing eye,
Dame Igrayne's daughter, and King Urien's bride,

Though lying tongues about thee falsely lie,
Great was thy wisdom, very great thy pride.
Of hidden knowledge thou didst hold the key,
Climbing with lonely foot the mountain side.

"Let honourable word be spoke of thee,
Instructed daughter of a barbarous age,
When study was deemed art of grammarye,
When learning lived not in the written page,
But old tradition of the Druid hoar,
Caught from the teaching of the bard or sage.

"And thou, the mistress of the mountain shore,
Child of the sweet wild heather, and the ling,
Rough was thy wooing, with spears dipped in gore,
And waving banners, daughter of a king,
Ere torch was lit, and bridal couch was spread,
And fitted to thy finger nuptial ring.
Spear-won, and sharer of a soldier's bed,
Cloudy thy living days, and full of teen.
Let honourable word of thee be said.

"And thou, the princess of a land too lean,
Queen of the Waste-land, and the war-swept lea,
Daughter of sorrows, melancholy queen,
Let honourable word be spoke of thee.
The dying Arthur to the realm of rest,
From his last battle by the Cornish sea,
To the fair Isle, no living foot hath pressed,
The bright Avilion, ye ladies bore,
Where the sun sinketh in the golden west.

"Queen of all hearts, is not thy merit more
Than theirs? Thy loveliness doth theirs excel.
Thy like is left not on our dimmer shore.
Thou dost, in spirit world, a spirit dwell.
And earth is orphaned, and its light grown less.
Yet is it well with us, with thee since well.

" Ye quadrature of female nobleness,
Four shining stars in empyrean sky,
How may the poet in his song express
Your worth? He cannot pitch his note so high.
Sweet ladies, for my fault I pardon crave,
Who sway the chords with such weak mastery."

Thanks of their royal courtesy they gave.
With guerdon of their smiles they guerdoned me,
The queenly four. But the divided wave
Fled backward, as we churned the windless sea.
The stalwart rowers, as they bending row,
In rhythmic motion of their stroke agree.
Unto the land, where doth no north wind blow,
We speed along a path, that is not plain.
No ship of earthly mariner may go
That voyage, nor that harbour think to gain.
The spirit oarsmen, bending to their oars,
Uplift their voices in harmonious strain.

CANTO VII

"In the far Orient is a wondrous thing.
Beneath the groove Hyperion's wheel hath traced,
The golden waters of a Fountain spring,
In the wide desert and the sandy waste.
The quince, the medlar, and fair apple-tree,
With gourd and the vine-tendril interlaced,
The walnut, and the broad-leaved mulberry,
Olive, and fig, and plum, and luscious pear,
Grow round its basin of black porphyry.
The citron and the date-palm flourish there.
And, in the branches of those happy trees,
Birds of bright plumage, beautiful and rare,
Hold in our human tongue their colloquies.
Alike the distant, and the near, they know,
And, conversant, reveal the destinies.
That lymph, that sparkle with a golden glow,
Like to the throb of the Neptunian main,
Alternates, constant, in its ebb and flow.
From the New Moon, till she begin to wane,
It magical hath so strange potency,
All that is old it will make young again.
One draught, from burden of long years set free,
Will turn the blanch locks into comelier brown,
To cluster round the temples wavingly.
Each line the pen of Time had written down
Time with a backward finger will efface.
Hence, many pilgrim steps had thither bowne.

Ah! but to win to the secluded place,
To keep the narrow track, and never stray,
Is difficult to men of Adam's race.
Much care it needeth to watch well his way,
Nor wander to the left hand, or the right.
To wander once is to be lost for aye.
The wilderness is void and infinite.
Straight, as an arrow, is the path, and strait.
How full of peril to the seely wight!
The Demons and the watchful Genii wait
To catch him tripping, in an evil snare,
Who would his mortal lot ameliorate,
And make him equal to the powers of air.
An hundred tricks and phantasies they've planned,
That he may lose himself, all unaware.
So many dangers lurk on either hand,
As scarce by courage can the bold outface,
Or, by his wisdom, may the wise withstand.

" When from the leasowes, and the briery hayes,
And cornfield, mother of the ripening grain,
The pilgrim enter the land void of grace,
Where raindrops fall not, nor the dew hath lain,
A land of leanness, and of sore duresse,
Of the goat-footed Satyr lone domain;
Around him where the sands spread limitless,
Strange mocking voices and wild laughter sound,
At near hand, in the treeless wilderness:
Go back! Go back! This is forbidden ground.
Oh clay-begotten! Not by you, by you,
Ye born of women, may the Fount be found,
Whose wondrous virtue power hath to renew
The years Time taketh in its clutch away.
Ye weak attempt what ye may never do.
Return, ye short-lived, fashioned out of clay!
This path be left by human foot unworn!
Not yours to win unto the Well of Day.
To find the waters of the Gate of Morn,
Ye mannikins of earth, too hard a quest,

Too hazardous for you, ye woman-born.
Doth he prove coward, and of craven breast,
They rend him limb-meal, when he turn and flee;
If he be valiant, if he vail not crest,
They yield him passage, for a man is he,
If ready hand upon his hilt he lay,
And doubt not for their threat and raillery.
The glint of steel doth spirit hordes dismay.
The flash of falchion they durst ne'er withstand,
If, resolute in soul, one take his way,
And make his passport be his own good brand,
Who confident upon himself rely,
And trust for safety to his armed right hand.

"As, through the barren veldt, he plodding hie,
A little flower of known, familiar, kind
He will behold. Unto the path 'tis nigh.
His wife, his children, it hath brought to mind
And he will pluck it, for its loveliness.
If so, the warrant of his death is signed.
For it behoveth, in that wilderness,
To keep him steadfast in the narrow way,
And ever forward, without pause, to press.
To wander once is to be lost for aye.
The Demons and the Genii set a snare,
With fear to daunt him, or with lure to stay.
The flower, that flow'reth in the desert bare,
A cheat of glamour to beguile his eyes,
Aye flitteth backward, as he toward it fare.
The distance more is than his first surmise,
Until he halt, and the vain chase give o'er.
But all around the trackless desert lies.
His wife, his children, he shall see no more.
The path is vanished, that before was plain.
Hungered, athirst, he, faint with travail sore,
Shall cast about, and all his search be vain,
Beneath the sun, beneath the stars of night,
Condemned to wander in his weary pain.
The Demons and the Genii mock his plight.

On Death he calleth, but Death's step is slow.
He waileth, and his palms his bosom smite.

"That little flower, that in the desert blow,
If from its stalk he have no mind to tear,
They lure him with a gaud of richer show.
A semblable bright fowl, of aspect rare,
With feathers like to silver and red gold,
Doth in its crimson beak a jewel bear,
And half it seem to proffer, half withhold,
Which eager if he snatch at, he will stray,
Unless by judgment be his will controlled.
Then will the bird spread wing, and flee away.
He, but too late, his folly will deplore,
Whom to his loss did covetise betray.
His wife, his children, he shall see no more.
The path is vanished, that before was plain.
Hungered, athirst, he, faint with travail sore,
Shall cast about, and all his search be vain,
Beneath the sun, beneath the stars of night,
Condemned to wander in his weary pain.
The Demons and the Genii mock his plight.
On Death he calleth, but Death's step is slow.
He waileth, and his palms his bosom smite.

"If of the bait the treacherous fraud he know,
Nor, tempted by the Tempter, deviate,
At other ward, if they may trip him so,
Malevolent upon his path they wait.
Will, peradventure, at his side, appear
A semblable tame beast, of beauty great,
Lynx-spotted, frolicsone, devoid of fear,
And fawn, and gambol, and his steps attend.
And he would touch it for its beauty mere.
Little by little, ere himself hath kenned,
His feet have wandered, he doth random stray,
Unless he look well to the path he wend.
Then, with a horse-laugh, it is fled away.
Amazed he standeth, and his eyes explore

The bare, brown, desert. Him doth fear affray.
His wife, his children, he shall see no more.
The path is vanished, that before was plain.
Hungered, athirst, he, faint with travail sore,
Shall cast about, and all his search be vain,
Beneath the sun, beneath the stars of night,
Condemned to wander in his weary pain.
The Demons and the Genii mock his plight.
On Death he calleth, but Death's step is slow.
He waileth, and his palms his bosom smite.

"If, unpersuaded, his foot swerve not so,
A deeper ambush will their craft prepare.
When he be wearied, and his heart sink low,
A purling brooklet, and an orchard fair,
Distant a little, he rejoicing sees,
A shade to shelter from the scorching glare.
And apples hang on boughs of leafy trees.
A trick of glamour and illusive art.
Unto the wayfarer: *Sit, take thine ease,*
Call spirit voices. *Thou hast done thy part.*
Eat, drink, and slumber, for a little while.
Then go more vigorous with gayer heart.
Thus they the foolish and the weak beguile,
The Demons and the Genii of the waste.
And he, who, wearied with the lengthening mile,
Would drink those waters, those fair apples taste,
And snatch a rest beneath the pleasant shade,
Quitteth the path in his unthinking haste.
The thing he seeketh doth him still evade.
Little by little, though it look so near,
It fleeteth backward, till he pause dismayed.
Around him is the desert, void and drear.
Into the path he will return again.
But that is vanished. 'Tis nor there, nor here,
And all his effort, and his toil, is vain,
Beneath the sun, beneath the stars of night,
Condemned to wander in his weary pain.
The Demons and the Genii mock his plight.

On Death he calleth, but Death's step is slow.
He waileth, and his palms his bosom smite.

"By lure of pleasure be he moved not—Lo!
One cometh up to him from hinder side,
A seeming old man, with a beard of snow,
Of pilgrim aspect, one whose sap is dried,
But vigorous and hale. Courteous his mien,
Yet burneth in his dark eye quenchless pride.
They talk together. What his eyes have seen,
The stranger telleth, and his words are wise.
He knoweth all things, that on earth have been.
The One, he saith, the many doth comprise.
In all the doctrines, that the schools have taught,
He versed is, and all old philosophies.
Predestination, that freewill make naught,
At this he glanceth. *Except will is free,*
The good or evil, that our hands have wrought,
Ourselves we do not. 'Tis necessity.
Have we no power to choose, or to refuse,
Men are but instruments of destiny.
'Tis an ill craftsman, who his tool accuse.
Let men be merry, while they will and may.
For what is conscience but a thing to lose?
He speaketh next of the primeval day,
Of Cosmos veiled in comprehending night,
How brooding darkness upon all things lay,
Till first on Chaos dawned the quickening light,
And earth, and ambient air, and liquid sea,
From clash of atoms in their whirling flight
Sprang into being, 'neath this canopy,
Bespangled with innumerable stars,
Fair earth, the mother of each herb and tree,
And ocean, wager of perpetual wars,
That seek to rise, and overwhelm the dry,
Wounding the rent cliff with unsightly scars.
Soon genial warmth did nature vivify,
With scaly fish, and every creeping thing,
And every beaked and feathered fowl, that fly,

'Twixt earth and heaven, with beat of joyous wing,
And each four-footed beast, which suck the breast,
Kind by his kind, and man their self-named king.
He showeth, man is cousin of the beast,
Naked at first, weak dweller in dark cave,
Scarce able to do battle with the least,
With implement of flint, and sharpened stave,
Till he found speech, and uses of the fire,
And learned to worship at his father's grave,
And learned to drive his cattle to the byre,
And goodly raiment on his back to wear,
Cities to build and houses of desire,
To turn the stiff glebe with the labouring share,
Draw gold and silver from the caverned mine,
And offer incense to his God and prayer.
While a pleased ear the listener incline,
Little by little, tempted, he will stray
With foot, that wander from the path's confine.
Then suddenly, that pilgrim, worn and grey,
Will laugh an eldritch laugh, and disappear,
And he be lost. He cannot find his way.
Around him is the desert void and drear,
Where raindrops fall not, nor the dew hath lain.
The path he seek is neither there, nor here.
And all his effort, and his toil, is vain,
Beneath the sun, beneath the stars of night,
Condemned to wander in his weary pain.
The Demons and the Genii mock his plight.
On Death he calleth, but Death's step is slow.
He waileth, and his palms his bosom smite.

" If, heedful, he the path depart not fro',
The specious Tempter, when his wile is tried,
Sage with the honeyed lips, and beard of snow,
Within whose dark eye burneth quenchless pride,
In time will quit him. But they change their plan,
The demon-haunters of the desert side.
In the mid path, and opposite the man,
A tawny lion rageth, full of ire.

Let him continue, as he first began,
If to the fountain of the soul's desire
He would win access, and put ready hand
Unto the sword-hilt, nor his foot retire.
Forth from the scabbard if he pluck the brand,
And press upon the beast, and boldly dare,
The beast will vanish. It will make no stand,
But unsubstantial fade into thin air.
The Demons and the Genii cannot face
The flash and glitter of the falchion bare.
But is he fearful, if he danger weighs,
And would go backward, they will rend and slay
The coward, who no hand on weapon lays.
His bones shall bleach upon the desert way.
His wife, his children, he shall see no more,
The fool, who faltered in his bold essay.
The lion, if he budge not, will but roar.
Who confident upon himself rely
Hath found a key to master every door.

"The Demons and the watchful Genii,
Malevolent at other ward still wait.
They think to catch him by their subtlety,
Solicitous, because their hour grow late.
Sitteth beneath a palm a lady fair.
Seemeth the trouble of her soul is great.
Her breasts she beateth, sorrowful with care,
And raineth from her sad eyes tearful rain,
The silken locks of her disordered hair
She plucketh out, and mourning doth complain :
Is it as nothing, wayfarer, to thee,
That cruel bandits have my lover slain,
And made me captive, born of parents free,
A queen my mother, of such high estate?
Oh thou, who passest, listen to my plea!
For I was taken, at my father's gate,
By villain robbers, and their sport am I;
Amid my maidens, who as mistress sate,
Now serve the mean-born. Hearken to my cry!

Give ear, oh stranger, to a lady's prayer!
Oh, leave me not in the lone land to die,
Or shameful slights and contumelies to bear:
Yet am I fair to look upon, men say,
And have of gentle qualities my share.
His very pity causeth him to stray,
Except he, conscious of her acted lie,
Be vigilant, nor quit the beaten way.
Doth he regard not, nor approach her nigh,
She curseth him. Better she ban than bless.
For the curse causeless hath no potency.
But once to wander in that wilderness,
It is to shut upon oneself the door
Of hope, and the long toil make profitless.
His wife, his children, he shall see no more.
The path he left he never shall regain.
Hungered, athirst, he, faint with travail sore,
Shall cast about, and all his search be vain,
Beneath the sun, beneath the stars of night,
Condemned to wander in his weary pain.
The Demons and the Genii mock his plight.
On Death he calleth, but Death's step is slow.
He waileth, and his palms his bosom smite.

" If her false tears, and crocodilian woe,
Do nothing move him, but he keep on way,
With arméd legions, a more open foe,
They will deter him, and his progress stay.
The Demons and the Genii of the waste
Their troops assemble as for battle day.
In his good falchion let his trust be placed,
He look for safety to his own right hand,
His soul within in triple brass encased,
He press upon them. They will ne'er withstand.
The glint of steel doth spirits so dismay,
And gleam and glitter of the naked brand.
If he prove coward, him they rend and slay.
They tear him limb-meal, if he turn and flee,
The fool, who faltered in his bold essay,

But to the valiant yield a passage free.
His foot shall enter the secluded place,
Where, round the basin of black porphyry,
The reaching gourd and vine-shoot interlace
The quince, the medlar, and Pomona's bough,
And every plant, that nurture fruit of grace.
The man is worthy. Him the Fates allow
To quaff the waters of the living well,
That smooth the furrows, which old Time did plough.
The birds, small citizens of air, that dwell
Amid the branches of those sightly trees,
With honour greet him, and his praises tell.
And unto him the Genii bow their knees,
His servitors, when he return again
From the brown desert to the greener leas.
His outward journey was with toil and pain,
But song and music, honeyed cates and wine,
Shall soothe his regress, made to triumph strain.

"Oh! few avail to reach that pathway's fine.
So difficult to men of woman born
To keep in bound, and thread the narrow line,
And never wander, every lure to scorn.
They fail, the seekers of inconstant mind,
To win through all, and find the Fount of Morn.
Thrice happy he, that child of Adam's kind,
Who taste the waters of this golden wave!
For he the burden of old age behind
Shall leave, yet wisdom of old years still have.
The subject spirits will his nod obey,
And bring him treasures from the sealéd cave.
And Time will touch him with a slow decay,
And little heeded the long years roll by.
His children's children shall around him play,
And grow to manhood. His old friends shall die,
But in his vigour he, the peer of Time,
The life of raven shall in length outvie."

This legend of the young world's early prime
The boatmen, bending to their painted oars,
Sing, antique story, fetched from Orient clime
By Punic mariners to Druid shores,
A parable, mayhap, I do not know,
Of cryptic meaning from some wise man's stores.
As, bending to their oars, they sing and row,
The sun hath climbed into the zenith high:
Then, out of golden haze, with coastline low,
Doth beautiful Avilion draw nigh,
With flowery meadows, and with greenwood shaws,
And rounded hillocks, under clear blue sky,
And apple-orchards, in wind-sheltered haughs,
And clustered elms, where stayeth hern his flight,
Or the familiar rook, at evetide, caws.

A little cove ran from an open bight,
By spit and headland, up into the land,
Whose sweeter waters with the salt unite.
A grey stone pier, work of Pelasgic hand,
Jutteth a score steps from the dipping shore,
With agate pebbles fringed and amber sand.
We cast our anchor, and our craft we moor.
Upon the greensward of Avilion
I step, attended by those ladies four.
The gentlewomen, who them wait upon,
Follow, in triple file, by fours, arrayed,
A second and a third quaternion.
These gathered roses, as their mistress bade,
Or gleaned the yellow gold of asphodel,
Or posies of the pure white lily made,
That shaketh fragrance from each trembling bell,
Or hidden violet, the sweetest quite
Of dainty perfumes the soul loveth well.

I looked about me with a great delight.
Morgan-le-fay then to me turned and said:
"No mortal visitant with earth-dimmed sight
Hath viewed these precincts, or had leave to tread

This soil before thee, since I weeping bore
Arthur, my brother, from the field of dead,
That Armageddon by the Cornish shore,
Where fell the manhood of three countries slain,
His breath still in him, his wounds dripping gore.
The Golden Age, the fair Saturnian reign,
That poets search for in the days of old,
Which chroniclers have sought on earth in vain,
Is here, this verity thine eyes behold.
Here hero souls enjoy their triumph won.
These of their acts reap harvest manifold.
Here resteth Uther, and his matchless son,
Who watched o'er Britain with unsleeping sword;
Great deeds and mighty by their hand were done;
And Urien, mine own, my wedded lord,
Gawaine and Ewaine, doughty Pellinore,
And Kay, the jester of the mocking word.
Enough. What need is? I will name no more.
Touched are thine eyes, and privileged to see
The things that happen on Elysian shore.
Thrown back the shutter of the grave for thee,
That thou behold, as through transparent pane,
The quintessence of old-world errantry."

Unto the daughter of the mild Igrayne
I said: "Oh, gifted in no common way!
We vie not with their finer porcelain,
We puny spirits of the modern day.
Who count him man enough to lift their gage?
Us did the Potter mould of viler clay.
They, children of our old heroic age,
With bolder action and more subtle grace,
Played their great part upon a larger stage.
The pens of poets their achievements blaze.
Now faded is the flower of chivalry,
That with its wonder did the world amaze."

She spake, the third crowned of the former Three:
"Men went to battle. Women stayed at home,

And wept for peril of their loves. Ah me!
On difficult adventure knight did roam,
Foredoomed to perish by the cruel steel.
She decked herself for him, who ne'er should come."

"Madam," I said, "now, in this Commonweal,
Together one felicity ye share.
Lover and loved, alike ye joyance feel.
Your griefs are dead. They cannot breathe this air.
The flower of heart's-ease doth this soil spring fro',
And happiness is entombed sorrow's heir.
For pain of parting nevermore ye know.
Death will not separate, nor seas divide.
But Love make payment of the debt he owe.
No lover here doth quit the loved one's side,
Nor any heart in its desire wax cold.
No mistress showeth here disdainful pride.
Love was your permit, and the key of gold,
That to you ladies did unlock the door,
And grant admittance to the guarded fold.
For you the soldier would his much make more,
And he, the Minstrel of the deathless lay,
Cared not to tread alone the Elysian shore,
But for your tender feet found equal way.
Coheritors, ye share his living name,
Oh! bare without you were this after day.
The cause, dear ladies, why ye hither came,
Is Love, that touched you with supernal fire,
A love, so perfect, it is free from blame."

Sudden I paused, for one in green attire,
A comely knight, with well accustomed hand,
Did sway the chords of a melodious lyre.
I knew him, Tristram of the vanished land,
Whelmed underneath the billows of the sea,
'Twixt two-horned Cornwall and the Scilly strand,
Lyonnesse, sunk for its impiety.
Its seven score churches in the deep lie drowned.
Their bells toll in the tempest audibly,

Above the wild waves, where they surge around,
And the loud bellow of the gusty wind.
Let him dread shipwreck, whoso hear that sound.
Thus in black-letter chronicle we find
Of Benedictine monk, or minstrel lay.
Lost is the land, and vanished out of mind.
But this is legend of a later day.
Lo! then he fingered, on the greensward nigh,
His harp. Upon the harp he well could play.
Beside him Isolde, of the sloe-black eye,
Reclined upon a bed of lilies white,
Slender and graceful. Proud her look and high.
Some grey had mingled with her tresses bright,
The mark of sorrow. Time had touched her not.
She died, when Tristram closed his eyes in night.
At Tyntagil, as, in her garden plot,
She listened to him harp in old-world time,
So now she listened. So he harped, I wot.

"'Tis merry, merry, sirs, at matin prime,
To rouse the tyned hart from his dewy lair,
When hounds are musical as bells that chime,
The chase to follow in the greenwood fair,
To drive the quarry, with the hound and horn,
Through brake, through fallow, which rank thistles bear,
O'er brook, by meadow, by the field of corn,
To skirt the marish, where the bog-weed lie,
To breast the steep hill, where the cloud is born,
To whoop, to halloo, hear the pack give cry,
While he, whose forked head hath the branchéd tree,
Bound with long leaps, but the hounds dog him nigh.

"Until he falter and go wearily.
Deep breaths he fetcheth with laborious sighs.
His shifts are done. Foundered and faint is he.
To soil he taketh, where the water lies.
With push of antler he will death delay.
Despair is in his soul. He weapon plies,
Armed with sharp prongs of double spear, at bay.

Then let the huntsman take his life in hand,
Win through his guard, and him with whinyard slay,
The Red King, ranger of the wild woodland.
Oh! loud he shall the mort on bugle blow—
Old laws of venery do so command—
In honour of the proud beast laid so low,
The beast, that on his head bear leafless tree,
Out of whose goodly stem wide branches grow."

Thus, in Avilion, on flowered lea,
Sir Tristram harped, and all we listened fain.
If rough and uncouth seemed his melody,
He harped so sweetly, ear was captive ta'en.
None stirred a foot, until his song had end,
And the last vibrant chord grew still again.
His eyes he lifted, and beheld me. "Friend,"
He cried, "who, visitant from extern sphere,
Tread'st fairy ground, upon whose steps attend
These lovely spirits, she, my loving fere,
And I, with greeting and fair courtesy,
Give thee sweet welcome. Bard, whom Heaven holds dear,
Upon this bed of lilies sit by me.
Here is my harp, if thou on harp wilt play.
If not, then let us commune brotherly.
Child of a too procrastinated day,
Born in a world, that is too deaf to hear,
Too dull to listen to poetic lay,
A world of fog, where vision is not clear,
Where all are busied in pursuit of gain,
Or indolently wait on pleasure mere!
As hogs they fatten on the chaff. The grain
Of lofty fancies, and of pure desire,
Is hidden from their slow-conceiving brain.
Mammon the God is, whom they most admire.
The voice of Duty doth in whisper speak.
Yet God, methinketh, doth of man require,
That, for his wages, he shall serve his week.
Thou, ne'ertheless, of coming ages heir,
Shalt win the guerdon thy life vainly seek.

Oh! life is brief, and it is full of care,
But, in the region of the longer stay,
The Muse hath garland for thy brows to wear,
When thy foot enter, loosed from clog of clay,
The garden of our glad Avilion,
Where, myrtle-crowned, we souls of lovers stray."

"Sir," I replied, "yes, after life be done.
So, many voices speak in spiritland.
Let him not boast, who still hath armour on,
Until he doff it, and re-sheathe his brand.
I toil in labour, but the seed I sow,
If it will ripen to the reaper's hand,
I cannot answer, whether ay or no.
Mayhap, 'twill prosper, if so be God will,
Or rust may smirch it, or ill wind lay low."

"God ground us both in his own bitter mill,
Tristram and me," said beautiful Isolde:
"We had of sorrow, while we lived, our fill,
Who now of gladness reap a thousand fold.
When Death shall touch thee with his ebon wand,
Then dross of earth will change to purer gold.
For Destiny, that bind with iron band,
Itself is subject to supreme control.
And thou perfected in thy place shalt stand,
Amid the twice-born, purified in soul.
Look not behind. The wreath doth hang before.
Run thou the race, for thou shalt reach the goal.
Lo! here are lilies and narcissus store,
And, pendent from the boughs of orchard trees,
Gleam mellow apples with ambrosial core.
And lovers walk upon the summer leas,
And listen to the voice of nightingale,
Where winter is not, nor do runnels freeze,
Nor the chill ice-king clothe the field in mail,
Or Boreas bluster, or tornado roar,
Nor the leaf wither, and the blossom fail.
With emerald carpet decked the meadow floor,

Pricked with the yellow gold of asphodel.
Nature her gifts doth prodigal outpour,
Shy violet, that please men's nostrils well,
And rose-buds, on unarmoured bush which blow,
That queen of flowers, most delicate of smell.
We couch us on the bed of lily snow,
In idleness of mood, and careless ease,
And, unregarded by, the moments go.
We listen to the minstrel harp his glees,
Or each his story doth to other tell,
Amid the mrytles and fair linden trees."

"Oh! happy ye, who in Avilion dwell,"
Replied I. "Madam, among those that hear
Your loves, and all the sorrow, which befell,
Let me be numbered. If I bold appear,
Yet render me this boon, for the sweet sake
Of these sweet ladies, and delight our ear.
The birds are singing in the hawthorn brake.
The gentle murmur of the Zephyr breeze
Hath whispered to the leaves, that tremulous shake.
The laughing wavelet of the neighbour seas
Imprinteth kisses on the jewelled shore,
As sportive maiden, her betrothed who tease,
And kiss him sleeping, and run back once more.
The wood-dove cooeth to his chosen mate.
The lark with music knocketh at Heaven's door.
Prithee, sweet Madam, be compassionate,
For gentle ladies should be soft of mood,
Oh! buffeted by blows of adverse fate,
Make me thy confidant, how Tristram wooed,
Add ear-gained knowledge to my book-learned lore.
To hear a love-tale is the poet's food.
Heavy the load, Love's prentices, ye bore.
Now in your death, felicity ye know.
Here let us sit, and listen, and deplore
Your living sorrows, if it like thee so.
I do beseech thee, sweet queen, to sweet yes.
School not thy ruby lips to screech-owl no."

She motioned: "Sir, this bed of lilies press.
Ye too, sweet ladies. Pleasant is this place,
By summer clothed in its own loveliness.
But, gentle sisters, if I show him grace,
And if my love-tale to this bard I tell,
I count him debtor, till his debt he pays,
And ask for payment. Look he pay me well,
With song, or sonnet, or with ballad lay,
And harpings, such as outvie Philomel."

With laughing lips, "The word our sister say
Is fitting," cried each damosel and dame.
But I: "Ye daughters of Elysian day,
The soil of earth is on me, whence I came,
Kneaded with clay my soul's essential fire,
For it is lodged within corporeal frame.
I cannot handle, as I would, your lyre.
The strings are rusted of the harp I play,
Yet, gentle Madam, since thou so require—
I with mine own hand barred the door of nay—
Such earthborn harpings, as indeed I can,
I promise, therewith be content, I pray."

"Sit lovely dames. Sit worthy gentleman:"
Imperious Isolde answered with a smile.
When all were set 'mid lilies, she began
Her story: "Daughter of Ierne's Isle
Was I, sole child of Agusance, high king.
Sweet maiden fancies did my dream beguile,
Untouched by love, whence should much dolour spring,
When Marhaus, kinsman of my mother's blood,
Was sent the truage, that was due, to bring
From Cornwall, that the Cornish king withstood.
So sailed he forth, athwart the dark blue sea,
To Tyntagil, beside the salt sea flood,
And did his errand, and his gage flung he.
His gauntlet lay upon the shaméd ground.
None dared to lift it. Each soul fearfully
Gazed on Sir Marhaus of the Table Round.

Amazed, astonied, and in doubt they stand.
No knight, so hardy, with that knight renowned
Durst spear to splinter for the Fair-horned land.
Marke's nephew, Tristram, he was but a squire,
Blushed at their baseness, wroth at his demand.
Red glowed his cheek, and his dark eyes flashed fire.
Before his uncle he bent low the knee:
King Marke, the boon, that I should first desire,
I have thy promise, thou wouldst grant it me.
Sir, seal of knighthood on my shoulder lay.
What, are these women, that they blench to see
A naked sword? Will none lift gage of fray?
This challenger, shall he return again
Into his land, unfoughten with, and say:
The men of Cornwall are of bastard strain,
They love the distaff better than the spear,
Too weak the weight of armour to sustain,
They shrink from battle with a maiden's fear,
I bring the truage, I was sent to bring,
Nor struck a stroke, the men are cowards mere?

"*Ah! nephew, Tristram,* said the weeping king,
Behold our bravest, how each cheek be white.
Thou, to whose lips thy mother's milk yet cling,
Wouldst woo the danger of this perilous knight?
A man-at-arms, and, from his boyhood, he
Matchless in joust, and masterful in might.

"Outspake young Tristram: *An he proven be,*
Out of his honour shall mine honour grow.
I dare to deem myself his match, pardie!
And, peradventure, shall o'ermatch him so,
That mighty Marhaus, mastered by this hand,
For all his vaunting, shall in death lie low.

"Dubbed by the stroke of honour-giving brand,
Arise, Sir Tristram, and defend our right,
King Marke saith, *for by thee we fall or stand.*
In ladies' quarrels be thou rathe to fight.

Succour the weak. Be bold against the strong.
Aye do thy devoir, as a gentle knight.
The cynosure of all the courtly throng,
So lifted he from floor the battle gage.
Fair women wept: *His day will not be long.*

"*Shall I do battle with a child, a page,*
And in a tyro's blood my glory stain?
Go, boy, be whipped! I war with warriors wage.
O'erweening Marhaus saith, in proud disdain.
And the frown darkened on his clouded brow.
But Tristram: *Not, Sir, till thy foe be slain,*
Begin thy boasting. It is idle now.
As royal is my house, as high my birth,
A king my father, and thy peer, I trow.
My serious earnest to thy mistimed mirth,
I'll make the rivets dance out of thy mail,
Till one, or both we, kiss our mother earth.
Spurn not my youth, before thine age prevail.
As yet we know not, who will live, who die.
Thou teachest me with woman's tongue to rail.
The Lords of Cornwall thy demand deny.
Unto thy king they will no truage pay,
Save what with spear-point and with sword ye buy.

"An Isle there gleameth in a Cornish bay,
Not distant from the Tower of Tyntagil,
Where goats are pastured in the summer day.
This place is chosen by the barons' will.
With lance sharp-grinded and with broadsword bright,
They twain shall combat, until one lie still.
They met, and long, and terrible, their fight,
Till, wounded to the death, Sir Marhaus fled,
And, overcomen, closed his eyes in night.
Upon their yards they mourning canvas spread,
His henchmen. To the fair Hibernian shore
They bear the freight of their illustrious dead.
Alas! Sir Tristram, for his hurt is sore,
Pricked by the venomed point of Marhaus' spear,

Sick nigh to death. Almost his day seemed o'er.
A lady said: *What doth Sir Tristram here?*
Are there not Leeches in Iernian land
Would steal from death the dead man laid on bier?
Ship make ye ready, King Marke gave command.
He sailed, Sir Tramtrist, with transposéd name,
For the Green Isle. Our destiny so planned.
I do remember me the day he came.
He harped upon his bed a merry lay
Of a coy lover and a forward dame.
The harp he handled in so sweet a way,
My soul was ravished with the notes he played,
Beneath my casement, which o'erlooked the bay.
I was his Leech. My royal sire me bade,
That pitiful, I should myself apply
To heal the stranger, who besought our aid.
I washed the venom, which did inly lie,
From pit of the foul wound, and eased its smart,
With simples, culled under a moon-lit sky,
And balsams pure, from Saracenic mart.
I tamed the fever of the fire-racked veins
To flow in gentler current round the heart.
I did not spare, Physicianer, my pains,
Till ruddy health remantled on his cheek,
And his blanch hand grew brown with manlier stains.

" I know not who 'twas did it, whispering, speak:
This guest, this stranger, to report unknown,
Is he, whose hand doth with the life-gore reek
Of noble Marhaus, neighbour to the throne.
Arise, Sir King! Avenge thine injury!
Let maim for main, let blood for blood atone!

" But my sire said: *Accurs'd he shall be,*
Who doth unto his guest a foul despite.
Is this Sir Tristram? But full manfully
He met Sir Marhaus in a challenged fight,
And broke with him, on listed field, fair spear.

He did his devoir, as a gallant knight.
Our kinsman's death doth yet his door lie near.
Depart, Sir Tristram, before set of sun.
Let not the star of eve behold thee here,
Or, verily, thy span of life is done.
Depart, Sir Tristram. With the close of day,
Our grace is ended, and our writ will run.

"Thus my Lord answered: *Sir, I go my way.*
Farewell! Due thanks for many favours shown
From heart I tender, and true homage lay
At thy fair daughter's feet. By her alone
I look upon this light, and breathe this air.
Doth any think him wronged? My glove is thrown
Upon the ground. See, knights, it lieth there.
Now let him urge his quarrel to my face,
Knight against knight, or evermore forbear.
None, not the boldest, dared that gage to raise.
Sir, said King Agusance, *depart in peace.*
It is not meet I laud thee, nor dispraise.

"So went he forth, and passed the narrow seas.
I loved Sir Tristram, and Sir Tristram me.
Love played upon our heart with soundless keys.
As yet I knew not, that I loved, nor he.
Great were his deeds, he spread his name abroad,
My knight, the foremost knight in chivalry.
But one unto King Marke my picture showed.
Me did he covet to become his bride.
Ah! bitter spousals, and of evil bode.
My love, he sailed athwart the salt sea tide,
Ambassador of Marke to fetch me home,
To Tyntagil, from my dear mother's side.
I yielded, for Sir Tristram's voice said, come.
Silken the sails, that winged our gilded bark,
And the blue wavelets laughed in silver foam.
I sailed with Tristram to be bride of Marke.
Ah! well I would, it had been Noah's Flood,

And we alone, together in one Ark.
Bathed in a summer haze the mountains stood,
The sunny mountains of the land of Wales.
And the wind failed. It suited well my mood.
I loved the flapping of those useless sails,
Content in soul the voyage to delay,
And look, in idlesse, on those hills and vales
Smooth, as a mill-pond, was the sea, that day.
We drifted with the current, to and fro,
Hither and thither. The wind died away.
In the ship's cabin, where we sate below,
It fortuned a sealed flasket caught mine eye.
Then said I laughing to my knight: *Oho!*
My gentlewoman and thy man are sly,
And for their solace they provision make.
It were a jest to drink their flagon dry.
My smile was mother to his smile. He spake:
A merry jest, faith? and broke seal, and filled
My cup. *I pledge thee, for thy beauty's sake.*
So sipped, and me to meet his challenge willed,
Who knew not what within of magic lay.
That bowl, in hidden lore, my mother, skilled,
Had mixed, a posset for my marriage day,
That lord and lady, bound in mutual chain,
Should cease not loving, linked in love for aye.
Such inward virtue did that draught contain.
It was the deed of destiny. Woe! woe!
We were enmeshed. To struggle was in vain.
Then in the fire of love my virgin snow
Was melted, and we loved for evermore.
Thence little joyance we did, living, know,
Tristram and I. We many crosses bore.
But now in gladness, as the day is long,
We dwell. The penance for our fault is o'er."

"Madam," I said, "if ye have purged your wrong,
And Heaven absolve, ye shall be quit of blame,
Borne on the current of a doom too strong,

For hands to grapple with. None else may frame
His like excuse by your necessity.
Our torch of love should burn with sinless flame,
And we should light it at the stars on high,
And guard it well, as they who walk in mine,
Lest in the fogs of earth it stifled die."

CANTO VIII

After a pause, said beautiful Isolde:
"Sir, make repayment with thy promised song.
Upon condition was my story told."
"Madam," I said, "and do my hearer wrong.
I rank not with the great of other day.
Sweet Muse, distil sweet honey from my tongue:
And, gentle ladies, listen to my lay:
Unto my power, my promise I redeem.
Weigh not my merit, my complaisance weigh."

So took I harp, and made the maid my theme,
Whom fair Estrildis bare to proud Locrine,
The lovely Nymph, who haunt the Severn stream,
Sabrina, by the cruel Gwendoline
Cast, bound, into the current, that divide
The Logrian meads, and apple-orchards green,
From the rough mountains of the Cambrian side.
Such ill revenge did a harsh step-dame wreak,
When, smitten in the battle, Locrine died.
Ah! lovable Sabrina, snowdrop meek,
Virginal lily, shrinking to be seen,
Who, fault-free, for her fault doth pardon seek,
And suppliant kneel to the victorious queen,
Innocent lamb, whom ravening wolves bay round,
The fierce-eyed soldiers, on their spears who lean.
She, loveliest maid, whose foot touch British ground,
No ruth, nor respite, by her prayer may win:

With thongs of hide her wrists and ankles bound,
As did her hour of womanhood begin,
She, doomed by wrath of Gwendoline to die,
Must, guiltless, expiate her father's sin,
Helpless, and lifted up in arms on high,
Tossed, shrieking, into Severn pool. But He,
Who reign in Heaven, pitied her misery.
From ponderable weight of body free,
She dwelleth, Naiad of the waters, now.
Oft in the gloaming doth the cottar see
This spirit sit beneath the witch-elm bough,
Laving her white feet in the dimpled wave.
She blesseth for the bride her marriage vow.
She dresseth with new flowers the poet's grave.
In frosts of winter, when the winds are cold,
She to the shepherd will his lambkin save.
Her doth the huntsman on the hills behold,
When the woods echo to the master's horn,
Or ploughman, as he turn with share the mould,
Or reaper, as he reap the yellow corn.
She watcheth over boys and girls at play,
She taketh in her arms the babe new-born.
Each lad and lass, in April hour, or May,
Their simple votive offerings shyly bring,
Fresh marigolds, or daffodillies gay,
Or cuckoo-bud, that messenger of spring,
Or cowslip pips, with orange-lidded eye,
Which when into the Severn wave they fling,
They chaunt: 'In pearly grotto where thou lie
On bed of rushes, upon thee we call,
Awake, Sabrina, nor our suit deny!'

As I did end my song, those ladies all
Began their praises: "Child of recent day,
Sure, liquid honey do thy lips let fall.
Ah, gentle minstrel, thou harp'st well thy lay."
And he of Lyonnesse: "My blast is blown!
Henceforth upon these strings let other play.
For Marsyas cannot match Apollo's tone,

Nor pupil to his master's touch aspire."
Abashed I say: "Such merit I disown.
Oh thou, to whom Meliodas was sire,
The laurel, that is forced, is ill to wear.
I vie not with the perfect on the lyre.
Can song-thrush with the nightingale compare?
I follow in their steps, but not as they.
Their boughs bear pippins, mine crab-apples bear."

My lady saith: "In mind this proverb weigh.
Such archer, as aim arrow at the sky,
The moon may hit not—should his hand he stay?
No, better 'tis to fail than never try.
To pierce the cloud, though empyrean height
He cannot reach, is unto heaven more nigh."
Or ever to the vision of delight
Was found fit answer, from the thicket came,
Where the birds sang, the very worthy knight,
Palomides of honourable name.
"Ah, princely son of Astlabor," they say,
"Behold the singer will enhance thy fame."

"Minstrel, and weaver of well pleasing lay,"
He, born in region to the dawn more near,
Saith, "I, the soldier of a bygone day,
With kindly greeting give thee welcome here,
Oh, privileged our sanctuary ground
To tread, and enter into light more clear!
With rosy garland by your hand be crowned
This gentleman. Fair ladies, show him grace,
And drop him curtseys, as ye compass round.
But, gentle sisters, he would see the face
Of our great Emperor. It behoves we bring
This traveller unto the wished for place,
To the pavilion of the glorious King.
Honour we so this honourable guest,
Whose song is as if Philomel should sing."

Then rose we from the lilies, which we pressed.
I said: "Though Fortune, while I live, be foe,
Ye sons and daughters of the land of rest,
More confident on my rough path I go,
Encouraged, heartened, by your words of praise,
Who know me better than myself I know."
White bulls and heifers on the prairie graze.
Dun deer come leaping from the hawthorn brake,
And gaze upon us with enquiring gaze.
Anon, I look on a pellucid lake.
Floateth upon its breast an Islet fair.
What Claude, what Turner, from his brush might shake
So sweet a landscape, framed in such an air,
Such trees that bend beneath the golden weight
Of sun-kissed fruit, and equal promise bear?
There doth each song-bird to his feathered mate
Utter his love-call, from the blossoming spray,
And thankful praises hymn, with heart elate,
To the great God, to whom all homage pay.
Nor gin, nor talons of the hawk, they fear,
Nor robber kite, nor any fowl of prey.
But food is plentiful through the long year.
Upon arboreal platform of the tree,
They sing. God heareth with indulgent ear.

A shell-like shallop, at a weed-fringed quay,
Is moored by shacklings of a bond as slight,
As beaded thread of gossamer, one see,
At dewy daybreak, when the world grow light.
That we should sit, my lady fair and I,
Upon the cushioned thwart, the gentle knight
Made signal with his hand, all silently.
We took our places in the boat alone,
We twain together. No need oar to ply.
The slender painter when aboard us thrown,
Sans sail, sans oar in any rower's hand,
Self-moved, as conscious, o'er the girdling zone
Of shining waters to the kernel land,
That lesser Isle within a larger Isle,

So swift it glided, the nose touched the strand,
Almost 'twere business of a longer while
To dip a pen, or turn a book-leaf o'er,
Though more the distance than a measured mile.

Knights and fair ladies line the green-banked shore,
Leodgrance, Galahalt, and Idris high,
Nentres of Garlot, doughty Pellinore,
With Clariance, the spear of Valencie,
Brangoris, Urien of the sleepless brand,
Uther, that Dragon wing of victory,
And stubborn Lot of Orkney's stormy strand.
By Urien stood Taliesin grey;
No minstrel in all wide Northumberland
Had equal skill upon the harp to play;
His practised fingers have the chords well strung,
Oh, hearken to his legendary lay.

"Upon a morning, when the world was young,
When melted were the snows, that long had stayed,
And dropped in tears each icicle that hung,
The royal herdsman sought his heifer strayed,
His wilful heifer wandered in the wood,
His fair red heifer in the thorny glade,
Where the grey wolf is, and the vixen's brood,
Where sharpeneth his tusks the grim wild-boar,
The bristly boar, belligerent of mood.
Now doth the cuckoo to the north once more
Reiterate: The summer comes amain.
The snows of Winter and black frosts are o'er,
For Spring, the Maid, into her grasp hath ta'en
His ice-cold sceptre. She with warmer hand
Will make it blossom and bear leaf again.
The buds are bursting, her sweet breath hath fanned.
The birds are singing with the joy of love.
Fragrant the smell is of the moist glebe-land.

"Lost in the wild wood, the fair stirk doth rove,
And he, the seeker, is himself astray,

Guided by him, who dwell in heaven above,
Led by the laughter of the mocking jay,
He walketh in a path he doth not know,
To whom the God his presence will display.
He vieweth on a bough the mistletoe,
That plant, the witness of our Yuletide mirth,
The bush that groweth not as others grow,
Unnourished by the juice and soil of earth,
Rootless, self-living, wonderful, divine,
To man a symbol of the soul's rebirth.
He saith: *The Gods are present by this sign.*
To the wood's heart as he take further way,
A fire of coals, with ruddy flare, doth shine,
Amid the tree-trunks, draped in lichen grey.
A mighty caldron on the coals is set,
Its seething contents boil and bubble aye.
One, garlanded with oak-leaf coronet,
A giant form, and naked to the waist,
Kilted with kilt of gules and violet,
Stirs with a golden rod the viscous paste.
Unto the youth he calls: *Sirrah, come near!*
The great Gods neither slacken, nor make haste,
In all their work their forethought doth appear.
Behold the caldron of tremendous Hu!
I bring the vernal season of the year.
Out of the dead the living I renew,
Make tree to bud, and meadow herb to bear,
And of her burden ease the yearning ewe,
Cause bird to nest, and male with female pair,
Cow to drop calf, and in the forest free
Each wild thing suckle cub in guarded lair.
Oh, privileged to view this mystery,
Death is Life's sister. They be near akin.
The grave the womb is of the life to be.
The plant doth wither, when the seed is in.
The thing ye shudder at, and dying name,
Is but the door at which new self begin.
Much the youth marvelled. From the caldron came
So sweet an odour, and so strange a power,

As mingled with its steam a rosy flame,
Tree put forth leaf, bud burst forth into flower,
The ewe, the she-goat, and the dappled doe,
Gave birth, and suckled each her own, that hour.
And apple blossoms their brave promise show,
And gay the meadow with the golden gleam
Of butter-cup, and daisy fringed with snow,
And blue of hyacinth, which pavement seem
Of very heaven, and pert red-robin-hood,
And cuckoo buds, that love the neighbour stream.
The God then saith : *Behold, the world is good.*
Prince, now withdraw thee, for thine eyes have seen
Things others see not in this holy wood,
Because thy heart is, and thy hands are, clean.
Dip first thy spear into this molten scum
For thy good luck. I give thee leave to glean.
Fear not the scorch, thence little scathe will come.
Stir round. That which thou gather bear away,
My token, if thy word convince not some.
But now thou walkest from the path astray.
A guide I give thee. Follow that I send.
My bird shall bring thee, with the close of day,
Out of this labyrinth, at point well kenned.
Ponder the things, which thou has seen and heard.
So spake the Wood-God, as friend speak with friend.
As the God bade him did the youth, nor feared
The flame, which scorched not. Lo, a wonder great!
He dipped his spear. To the barbed point adhered
A mass that hardened, and a glowing weight.
He turned him, but the God he may not see.
The God hath vanished. Where was set so late
The caldron, with its waft of spicery,
Is but a fire-mark on the blackened mould,
Betwixt two gnarled roots of the Druid tree,
And coals, turned into heap of ashes cold.
Hu keepeth well the promise, that he made.
The Gods are just, and to their promise hold.
His bird gave call. Instant the youth obeyed.
When flooded was the west with sunset glow,

From the dusk wood, and goblin-haunted glade,
His foot did issue. 'Tis a place he know.
In yonder pasture do his cattle graze.
Yon are the meadows, which his servants mow.
Orchard and home-close, with their hawthorn hayes,
He noteth, and the smoke from hearth ascend
To lose itself aloft in airy ways.
He can hear bleat the woolly mothers, penned
In their safe fold, can hear his lowing kine,
And honest barking of the dog well-kenned.
Through open door a ruddy gleam doth shine.
The wife is busied at her tasks within,
And all about her sit her maidens nine,
Each at her wheel, and diligently spin.
Men cease from labour, when the sun goes down,
But women end not, when the stars begin.
Steals stilly night upon the grange and town.
She foldeth all things in her mantle grey.
She weareth on her head a starry crown.
Tired with the load he'd borne, and length of way,
The Prince hath entered, supped, to chamber gone,
And doth his head upon the pillow lay;
Till Earth the veil hath from her face withdrawn,
And Belin robeth him in radiant light,
And diamond dew-drops strew the field and lawn.

" *Sir*, saith the Princess, *from her wilful flight*
Our fair red heifer is returned again,
Whom did, beneficent, some woodlaud sprite
Fetch back, lost estray in his wild domain.
Dear my lord, 'mid her sisters, see her graze—
Home is the best—upon the near champaign.

" *The God hath done this. To the God be praise,*
Sweet wife, replieth he. *The God is kind,*
With whom I communed in his holy place.
Good is the God, and liberal of mind.
Hear, oh my people, what your king ordain!
With the God's mark be this fair heifer signed,

Not to wear yoke, to draw no creaking wain,
But wander as she will, and pasture free,
Within our bound-stones, as her soul be fain.

"*Dear oh my lord, thy law is law to me,*
His princess answered. *But this lump of clay,*
That, shoulder-borne, thou didst bear home with thee,
At yester-even, at the shut of day,
For what a purpose didst thou toil to bring
It, idle cumber, to be cast away?

"*Nay,* quoth he, *Dame, the God, the Forest-King,*
Bade me to take it. 'Tis of omen good,
A bird of fortune, with auspicious wing.
Who hath it shall not lack of clothes or food.
Thus me the Giver, as he gave it, told.
Dread Hu, the mighty Demon of the wood.

"It was an ingot of the purest gold,
Pure gold, and tested, of approved assay,
The Shepherd-haunter of the wood and wold
Had bidden him dip for in the pot that day.
So wonderful its virtue, cut a slice,
Or hew a chunk out, it will equal weigh,
Before and after, weighed in balance nice,
All undiminished by a single grain,
So self-sufficient, 'twill for all suffice.

"For the Great Gods, Lords of the Cloud-domain,
Full oft stepped down from their high seats, of yore,
With whom in field-path, or in shady lane,
Might earth-born commune, or in forest hoar,
And look, as one upon his brother's face,
Upon a God's face. Now they come no more.
They dwell at distance, veiled from mortal gaze,
And, if they speak, their voice we cannot hear.
The world is altered since our fathers' days.
Then man himself unto the Gods was near.
Then Taran's voice did in the thunder sound,

And Belin, radiant in his youth, appear.
Then Hu, the Shepherd, in the glen was found,
Hu with his caldron of sweet spiceries,
Who fetched the Maid Spring forth the frozen ground,
And bade the primrose ope her pretty eyes:
Then did the coursers of fleet Eponay
Whirl in winged car the daughter of the skies.

"The world is altered since our fathers' day.
The world is altered. Ay, the world grows old.
But, what of that? We, 'scaped from Time's decay,
In the fair Isle, which ocean's lap enfold,
Inhabit in the glad Avilion,
Amid the great ones are our names enrolled.

"Cease, cease, my harp! If I have meetly done,
Your plaudits render, and with praise repay.
Your praise be guerdon, if I palm have won.
For ended now is Taliesin's lay.
I, living, harped in Urien's halls of pride,
These spirit-chords with spirit hand who sway."

That fair companionship gazed on my guide,
Each wondering, after, fixed his eyes on me,
Who waited silent at my lady's side.
Then Taliesin spake: "Honour to thee,
Whose eyes are opened, and whose ear can hear
Such things, as others neither hear, nor see,
Flesh-clothed, and visitant from extern sphere,
Hail to the star upon thy birth which shone!
Salute him, Princes! His torch shineth clear."

I speak in response to the darling son
Of the Northumbrian Muse: "Spirit of fire,
The rugged mountains of wild Wales upon,
Thy strains still linger, nor thy harpings tire.
To match him who will confidently dare
'Gainst the skilled hands, which ruled the Cymrian lyre?"

Proud speech he spake then: "If from thls grey hair
"Rival desire to filch these leaves of bay,
Who claim my wreath shall it have leave to wear,
Upon my harp who more divinely play.
With Taliesin an thou list to vie,
Match, if thou canst, his notes with seemlier lay."

"Oh, do not put me to such test," said I.
"To win or lose would bring an equal shame.
Doth dog eat dog? 'Tis unkind rivalry.
If I should fail, would not your censures blame
My rashness, that I dared. Haply to win,
To bring discredit on so great a name,
To make those laurels by one leaf more thin—
If I should steal from well reputed head—
I will not sin, Sirs, by your leave, such sin.
Ye Kings, absolve me! Mine excuse is said.
To Taliesin's let my Muse give way.
He first, and after, in his steps, I tread."

"Sirs," said King Urien, "he doth justly say,
Who would not lift from Taliesin's brow
The cherished garland, worn so long a day.
Ours is the loss. But we must needs allow
His harp be silent. His excuse is made.
Upon his laurel shall grow greener bough.
And we, mayhap, in our Elysian shade,
Have privilege to listen to his lyre,
When he return, his dust in graveyard laid."

King Idris spake then: "By the sun and fire,
Our Southron harpers can the ten-stringed shell
As sweetly handle, as your Northern shire,
As ye, who living dwelt, whose children dwell,
In fair Caer-Ivrok, beyond winding Trent,
In the proud land of mountain and of fell.
But, if this comer, by his own consent,
Forego his vantage, he doth generous deed,
Who to his rival his own cloak hath lent,

And more than equal to be less agreed.
Comrades, to the pavilion of our lord
This honoured guest, come, honourably lead."

They nod assent. The kings, with one accord,
A royal escort, lords of stately mien,
Conduct our footsteps, from their lakelet bord,
To the land's midheart, where, on lawny green,
Magnifical and spacious, doth upstand,
Of crimson samite woven, as I ween,
A fair pavilion, the world's wonder planned,
Inwrought with gold and rich embroidery,
The work of elf-queen and her maidens' hand.
Depictured in that glorious tapestry
The wars of Arthur, and his Dragon might,
And Badon Hill, his crown of victory,
Whence laurelled Peace, arrayed in spotless white,
Did, at his buskined feet, her olive lay,
And underneath the spreading beech invite,
On pipe of reed, the shepherd lad to play,
And village lass, in Sunday kirtle dressed,
To dance for gladness of the carried hay.
Then cider was from juice of apple pressed,
And sheaves on floor of granary were piled ;
From war and turmoil the tired land had rest,
While Arthur reigned, till his own sister's child
Raised rude rebellion, and usurped his crown,
And that last battle fought on Cornish wild,
With spear-thrust, and with sweep of broadsword brown,
When set the sun on Britain's ended day,
In flame of fire when Camelot sank down.

More costly, more magnifical, I say,
This tent, than the pavilion famed of old
Of him, whom did the hand of Bessus slay,
Against the ram when the rough goat waxed bold,
And Oromasd to high Olympian Jove
Resigned the sceptre, that the world controlled.
So fairy hands in elf-land it ywove,

With gold enriched and sendal broideries.
Blazoned in or, the Dragon flamed above,
Upon its tall mast, flaunting in the breeze.
A hundred knights, a hundred ladies, wait
Without, or saunter 'mid the fruit-bowed trees.

All-glorious Arthur at his tent door sate,
With Ewaine, the white-handed, at the chess
He was a playing. Regal his estate.
Perfect his form in manly comeliness,
His auburn locks a little streaked with grey.
Upon his brows did a crown royal press.
Not old, but as a man, who middle day
Of strenuous life and action leave behind,
Prudent in council, valorous in fray,
The bond, which did the leaguéd nations bind,
The smiter with the sword Excalibur,
Shepherd of shepherds, king of godlike mind.

Gawaine detached him from the crowd: "Fair Sir,"
He said, "whose lot is, where we lived of yore,
Whose coming maketh in our world some stir,
How goes it? Are the days of Britain o'er?
Doth Britain prosper? Is it with her well?
Or in that proud oak is there rotten core?"

I paused a moment, and my countenance fell.
"If these be symptoms of a land's decay,"
I said, "be judge, Sir, by the signs I tell.
We read our alphabet the backward way,
Send A to rear, post as van-leader Z,
We read our alphabet from Z to A.
We place the foot above the proper head,
The belly make lawgiver to the brain.
Base handicraftsmen weigh the better-bred.
King Mob is king, with democratic reign.
All love of country from our hearts is flown.
We be too Christian to bear arms, or stain
The soldier's sword, and at his cost we groan.

We be so Christian, as ourselves to hate,
Cherish another's good, forsake our own,
Byword and mock of every gibing State,
The Frenchman's laughter, and the Teuton's scorn,
Since Lesser Britain lord it o'er the Great.
If but for us might Arthur be reborn,
And pluck from sheath Excalibur his brand,
Could Roland upon Fontarabian horn
Blow such a blast as should awake the land,
And rouse the nation from its drowsy sleep,
Shoulder to shoulder if but all would stand—
God will not help us, save ourselves we keep.
Some err by slackness, over-rash are some,
Some leap before they look, some fear to leap.
A hireling shepherd and a watch-dog dumb
Are guard sufficient for a tranquil day,
But when the blizzard, or the grey wolf, come,
How then? Blind leaders make the blind to stray,
Blind guide to follow—it is guidance vain—
Into the ditch that yawn beside the way.
To think our own thought is laborious pain.
We listen to the siren flatteries
Of common demagogues, mere rogues in grain,
And turn their grindstone, 'fore their mocking eyes.
Each hath, forsooth, his proper axe to grind.
We sweat and turn, more credulous than wise.
But if a statesman of a master mind—
The heart of this great people still is sound,
Could, by Heaven's help, we such a leader find,
As erst was in the son of Chatham found,
Then would awake the Lion of the Seas,
Passant, regardant, gloriously crowned,
From sluggish torpor and inglorious ease;
Still hath he teeth to rend, and claws to tear,
Though tolerant he endure small injuries;
When his voice thunder, and his fierce eyes glare,
And his mane stiffen, and he threaten fray,
Let him, who hunt him, of his spring beware."

I thus, for better word 'twere lie to say.
He scornful: "Should the cobbler, who mend shoe,
Desert his last, and leave his customed way,
To botch the Commonwealth? This thing is new.
Methinketh, we did better in my days.
The many then were governed by the few.
For gently born is covetous of praise.
Loss pricks him little. Shame more deeply stings.
Life but a feather, weighed with honour, weighs.
Churls are but churls, and they think churlish things.
Certes, I little love Democracy,
Except it were a Commonwealth of Kings."

"Your days were other days, you not as we,"
I said. "This age is Iron, yours was Gold.
Our knighthood is a jest on chivalry.
Some put on spurs, who dare not falchion hold.
The Bath, the Garter, and the Golden Fleece,
Approach not to the Table Round of old,
Though they be worthy, who succeed to these.
But of the rest, who prick up the ear at call
Of clarion, carpet knights, and men of peace?
It is an honour granted to the small,
As peerages are granted to the great,
For what? God only knows, who knoweth all.
Of old in honoured seat the baron sate,
And every knight to king was reckoned peer,
Ere rank was purchased at too cheap a rate.
Now grows the list with every growing year.
The field of gold doth so with mushrooms teem,
Soon poor esquire will pass into the sere."

Sir Gawaine said: "Though sober man thou seem,
I scarce can credit, what thou sober say.
Your world is such a world of nightmare dream,
Where all is done in topsy-turvy way,
A topsy-turvy world, where high is low,
And tail wags dog, and skipper learns to obey.
Do backward to their source your rivers flow?

Your swimming fishes, do they nest in trees ?
Your fierce hound doth it flee the timid doe ?
Thank God, my days were other days than these,
Ere rusted was the spur of chivalry,
And proud endeavour stooped to coward ease."

He ceased. Sir Kay, the Seneschal, drew nigh,
Goodly to look upon, well knit and tall,
With jest on lip, and supercilious eye.
Mocking he spake, Sir Kay, the Seneschal :
" Grist to full mill. What doth this minstrel here ?
Is't little David come to harp to Saul ? "

" Thy froward speech is to thy lips too near,"
Sir Gawaine said. " Thou dost unmannerly.
Let not the clown in gentleman appear.
Think, Sir Kay. For it toucheth more than thee.
They by their act all gentilhood distain,
Who show them such, as churls in mirror see.
Too sharp a tongue doth token shallow brain,
Where tares are plentiful, ill fares the corn.
Upon the minstrel look not in disdain.
This gentle minstrel doth not merit scorn,
But him the sweet Pierides hold dear,
Who with their bough his temples will adorn."

Sir Kay excused him : " If I flout and fleer,
'Tis but a habit. Barking dogs don't bite.
The surface word, that to my tongue lie near,
Sans thought, 'tis out with, whether wrong or right.
I tender to this guest apology,
If the shaft rankle, that I shot at sight."

" Sir Kay," I said, " but from my panoply
The bolt glanced harmless. Prithee, do not spare.
Tall Sir, if I may break a lance with thee,
Great heads upon broad shoulders giants bear,
Garnished, they say, with little wit within,
And who begat thee was Goliath's heir."

"Aha! well parried. Thy point pricked my skin,"
Sir Kay said. "I must needs be friends with thee,
And count thee cousin of my mother's kin.
I love him who can bandy jest with me,
And with like weapon tilt, as Kay hath done.
For I can take, as well as give, pardie."

But Aurea spake: "Sir Kay, thou toward son
Of steadfast Antour, who, with soul of pride,
Didst dare to match thee, where the waters run
Of winding Trent, which the twinned realm divide,
'Gainst two crowned champions, with thy single brand,
That day of battle, by the Humber side.
Sir, grant me boon. I kiss thy knightly hand.
The suit of lady knight must not refuse,
In ladies' eyes if he wish well to stand.
Let this man's merit be my fair excuse,
In Britain born, where ye dwelt long ago,
My loving friend, and darling of the Muse,
Upon whose lips the fire of Heaven doth glow:
Bring him to look on Arthur, face to face,
And hold talk with him. Sir, such favour show,
And count us worthy to receive such grace.
Initiate to lift the sacred veil
Of Eleusinian shows, he shall retrace
His steps, and tell unto the world your tale.
So, half-forgotten in the mist of Time,
Ye shall, whose bones are dust, whose memories fail,
Forsake your winter, and renew your prime,
And live again in his ennobling lay.
So great a virtue hath the poet's rhyme."
Doffed his plumed hat the Seneschal, Sir Kay.
"Fair lady's suit, if she be passing fair,"
Quoth he, "no gentleman thereto saith nay.
But, Queen of Beauty, with whom none compare,
More lovely than world-famous Guenever,
Or Cornish Isolde, with the golden hair,
The suit is granted, that your lips prefer.
Our glorious king, with all-compelling eyes,

Himself you calleth, if I do not err.
To mean and little men such courtesies
Imperial Arthur doth not use to show,
Only to such as by their merit rise
Above the vulgar, whether high or low,
For heir to king is sometimes churl in mind,
And out of cowherd gentleman may grow,
With altered circumstance, should Heaven be kind.
Punctual obedience is a monarch's due.
With beckoning finger his command is signed."

Thus bidden, unto the presence near we drew.
Sweet Aurea curtsied, I touched ground with knee.
"Illustrious king, whose fame is ever new,"
I said, "'tis honour, thou regardest me,
Strong rock of Britain, her oppressor's dread,
Foeman of all, whose heart plan villainy."

He then, who reigneth in Avilion, said:
"Hail to the Star, that did so recent shine,
Radiant on earth, and now, among the dead,
Doth shine more radiant. Oh, celestial sign,
Who with thy beauty didst the world amaze,
Till death removed thee to this realm of mine!
In admiration on thy form we gaze,
We sons and daughters of Avilion,
Indwellers in the spiritual place.
Hail to the bard, on whose beginning shone
Thy lamp, ere passing years powdered with grey
Those thinner locks, whose foot a road hath gone,
That others tread not, lighted by thy ray!
See, gentle friends, the sun hath sunk to rest.
The glow is faded of the dying day.
Sir, in Avilion, to-night, my guest,
Thou with thy lady, both shall sup with me,
Though not on meats in earthly kitchen dressed,
But what Pomona bring to garden tree,
Fig, apple, plum, and cluster of the vine,
With juicy pear, and sugared strawberry,
Peach, apricot, and luscious nectarine,

Junkets, and bowls of clouted, yellow, cream,
And liquid honey, which its comb enshrine.
Give pardon, if our dainty banquet seem
Too meagre for earth's grosser appetite;
For spirits, woven of the pure sunbeam,
Imponderable forms of air and light,
Age doth not touch us, nor we feel decay.
This easy meal and the reposeful night
Make good the loss of energising day.
While sojourner in realm of Faërie
Adopt our fashions, and accept our way."

At table, spread beneath a linden tree,
We sate and supped. The moon and stars shone bright.
In troth, we were a goodly company.
I saw my lady take nor sup nor bite.
Untouched, untasted, what before her lay;
She sniffed the savours with a great delight.
As butterflies on flowery perfume stay
Their natural longing, on such spirit fare
She browsed, emerged from chrysalis of clay.

Harped his wild harpings to the sonant air
A viewless harper, on a harp unseen.
He sang of bickering spears, of broadsword bare,
Mailed knight, and archer, garbed in frock of green,
The pike, the battle-axe, the twanging bow,
The wars of Arthur, what his acts had been,
The triumph shout, the Saxon overthrow,
The White Horse borne adown the tide of flight,
The standard taken from the flying foe.

Ye Cymrian virgins, let your heart be light.
With dance, with music, as he homeward fare,
Greet ye your champion, and his praise recite.
Oh, twine ye laurel for your hero's hair!
His fame is greater than his father's fame.
His dragon crest he did so proudly bear.
His eager wrath was as a fiery flame.

The viper brood beneath his arméd heel
He trod, when gathered septs to battle came,
Our Chief, the saviour of our Commonweal,
Who may abide the buffet of his hand?
He hath a sword, that carves both stone and steel.

Weep, careful widows of the Logrian land!
Your yellow locks, ye maids of Wessex, tear!
He reapeth with the sickle of his brand,
He reapeth harvest, and he will not spare.
At Badon hill your true loves perish slain.
Your mourning weeds make ready for your wear.
On Freya call. Your suppliant prayer is vain.
Her ear is deaf, she cannot hear your cry.
Oh! cry aloud, for she not heareth plain.

Thou faithful servant of the God on high,
Servant of God, thy Nunc Dimittis sing,
Thou good old Dubrice, 'tis thine hour to die,
For victory hath fanned, with eagle wing,
Him, to whose side thy consecrating hand
Did buckle steel, our dread Pendragon King.

Proud children of the sea-engirdled land,
Your native manhood is your surest stay.
The world in arms, ye may its shock withstand.
His fellow-countrymen of after day,
The deeds remember of Britannia's prime,
Kindle your torches at his starry ray,
Whose car doth circle round the Pole sublime.
Fear God, fear shame, but fear no other fear.
His steps who follow to his height may climb.

So harped that harper, and his voice rang clear
In the fair orchard. When that harp did cease,
Forthwith Sir Ewaine whispered in mine ear,
For he sate next: "In the glad lot of these
To be partaker, minstrel, is it sweet?
This our soeiety, doth it well please?"

"Yea, Prince," said I, "but by too quickly fleet
The passing moments. Here my stay is brief.
When I the number of my days complete,
I shall return, in gladness, not in grief.
But whither? Not to your Avilion,
Where the flower fade not, nor grow sere the leaf.
For ye were children of a day bygone,
But I have learnt, in spirit realm who stray,
The laws and customs of your land, which none
Hath power to cancel, or durst disobey.
Like draweth still to like, kind to his kind.
Their bound is fixed, they cannot break away.
Each generation have their lot assigned,
Nor jostle with the century before.
Each age is hidden its own veil behind.
With some mine equals, on that other shore,
I find my camp, and with your equals you.
Unbridged the gulf is. Who may pass it o'er?"

King Arthur overheard, and answered: "Who?
Why he, the poet of the master mind,
Or lover, with the lady, whom he woo.
Heaven is to these beneficent and kind.
When she be full, the regent of the night,
Over the waters, such may access find
Hither, along her road of dazzling light,
To visit us at will, and, when they will,
As homing pigeons take their homeward flight.
But, gentle friend, it is Avilion still,
Where all inhabit, whether here or there,
Who climbed with living foot Fame's arduous hill.
She, who did meet thee by the rowan fair,
When with her finger she did touch thine eyes,
Gave thee to breathe of our Elysian air.
The lands are manifold, not so their skies.
All is Avilion, both far and near,
Where dwell the spirits of the good and wise.
Wheel within wheel, sphere within ordered sphere,
The hub, the centre point of all, are we,

Whose deeds did more magnifical appear.
When the grave yawn, and the bell toll for thee,
And dirge be said, and dust with dust unite,
Coheir with us of immortality,
No more of favour, but inherent right,
Thou shalt return, and bear thy laurel bough,
And with thy harping fill us with delight,
When thou return—I do not ask it now :
Thou wearest yet habiliment of clay—
And spirit hands shall decorate thy brow."

Such words did high, imperial, Arthur say,
Lord of Avilion, the fair confine,
A gracious promise for no far-off day,
Then fill, as with the daughter of the vine,
Crystal, more rare than Venice could provide,
And to my lady sign with beckoning sign.
She took the cup, Aurea, the gentle-eyed,
From the King's hand, and made obeisance low,
Then glided near, and, standing at my side,
Spake softly : " Sip this. 'Twill not harm thee, no.
Dear one, repass to common earth again.
Thou must go hence. The time is come to go.
Grave on the mindful tablet of thy brain
The things made visible to thy clear eyes,
Whence I the mote, that hindered them, have ta'en.
My task is done. Let what is shown suffice,
And apprehended in thy memory dwell.
The wise himself should leave the world more wise.
Dip not the vision in Lethean well,
Nor steep it in the juice of poppy-head.
Unto the world see thou thy story tell.
A little while ! Thou shalt again retread
This path. Adieu ! but not a long adieu.
The shadows lengthen, and the sands are sped.
In upper glass they minish and grow few.
Below they cluster in a gathered mound.
A scanty remnant stayeth to run through."

"Though death at bottom of the cup were found,
Dear," I made answer, "so thou give command,
My lips would quaff it. Shall I fear thy wound?"
The tendered chalice took I from her hand,
And drained it to the dregs. 'Twas bitter sweet,
As gall and honey, joined in marriage band.
Forthwith, as one asleep upon his feet,
Who walk in dream, I was, on waking, nigh
To mine own door, in the dim, voiceless, street.
Homeward I wend beneath the starry sky,
Pondering the things, which I had heard and seen,
The veil of death, and what behind it lie.
For I have in the world of spirits been,
And held communion with the Great Ones there,
And her I reverence the most, my Queen.

SIR PALOMIDES

"I take record of Palamydes,
The trewe man, the noble worthy knight,
That ever loved, and of his paine no relees,
Notwithstanding his manhood and his might,
Love unto him did full great unright,
For aye the bet he did in chevalrie,
The more he was hindered by envie.

" And aye the better he did in every place,
Through his knighthood and busie payne,
The ferder was he from his ladies grace,
For to her mercy might he never attayne,
And to his death he coud it not refrayne,
For no daungere, but aye obey and serve,
As he best coude, plainly till he sterve."

CHAUCER.

INTRODUCTION

THE *Morte d'Arthure* is an antique jewel reset in medieval setting. Some portions of the story, such as the war with king Lot, that with Ryence of North Wales, the sun myth of Balin and Balan, and the legend of the Sangrail, date far back to pre-Christian and pre-Roman times. These four matters will be found dealt with in separate notes. Other incidents, such as the conquest of Gaul and the war with the Emperor Lucius Tiberius, are based on events, which really occurred during the period of Roman occupation. The career of the adventurer Maximus had left a very deep impression on the British mind. In the year 383, he, raised by a mutiny of the troops to the headship of the armies of Britain and saluted as emperor, crossed over into Gaul, which he won with the help of British swords, slew the emperor Gratian, and received the submission of his native Spain. Two or three years later he invaded Italy, and drove out the youthful Valentinian. The eastern emperor, the great Theodosius, then thought it time to interfere, and he crushed Maximus by his better generalship and superior might. The beginning of the story was remembered, but the end forgotten. When Arthur became a greater name in legend than Maxen Vledig, the deeds of Maxen Vledig were transferred to Arthur. About a century before Maximus, another Roman officer, Carausius, had been given the command of a fleet to check the

ravages of the Saxon and Frankish pirates. The title of Comes litoris Saxonici, which might have meant, but did not mean, Count or Duke of Saxony, was conferred upon this Carausius, who, becoming suspected at court, revolted and usurped sovereign authority in Britain, which he maintained for seven years until treacherously murdered by Allectus, one of his officers. This is the slender historical foundation of Arthur's pretended conquest of the Scandinavian countries. But the extent of that conquest was fixed by the limits of the empire of Canute. In some misty way Canute—why call him Knut? he may have been Knut to his own countrymen, but he was always Canute to the English—became mixed up with king Arthur: both had waged successful war against the Saxons.

The era of the Crusades raised Arthur from being merely a Cymrian hero into the general champion of Christendom and one of the nine worthies. Three of these, as children used to be taught, but now are taught no longer, were Jewish: Joshua, David, Judas Maccabæus; three heathen, born before the Incarnation: Hector of Troy, Alexander the Great, Julius Cæsar; three Christian: Arthur, Charlemagne, Godfrey of Bouillon. In "Love's Labour's Lost" there is a slightly different list; two of the above are replaced by Hercules and Pompey. But the first list has Caxton's authority and was the generally received one. The credulity of the times believed that Arthur had not only smitten the heathen of the North, but also the Saracens of the South, and that he had gone on pilgrimage to the Holy Land and slain a giant in the mount of Araby. He had also founded the goodly fellowship of the knights of the Round Table. In the Winchester Round Table there are only places arranged for twenty-four knights besides the king. That table was a copy of the supposed original, but it was not constructed with any fraudulent design, though in an uncritical age it soon grew to be regarded as a real relic. But the minstrels soon found such limit much too narrow. They raised the number of the

knights first to sixty, then to one hundred, which held the ground long. By the time of Sir Thomas Malory the full complement had become one hundred and fifty, and the origin of the table was antedated to the days of Uther. But there is still a sideway glance at the previous hundred.

"And Merlin went forth to king Leodegrance of Cameliard, and told him of the desire of the king, that he would have to his wife Guenever his daughter. 'That is to me,' said king Leodegrance, 'the best tidings that ever I heard, that so worthy a king of prowesse and of noblenesse will wed my daughter. And as for my lands I will give him, wisht I that it might please him, but he hath lands enough, hee needeth none; but I shall send him a gift that shal please him much more, for I shal give him the table round, the which Uther-pendragon gave me; and when it is ful compleate, there is an hundred knights and fiftie, and as for an hundred good knights I have my selfe, but I lack fifty, for so many have beene slaine in my dayes.' And so king Leodegrance delivered his daughter Guenever unto Merlin, and the table round with the hundred knights."—*Morte d'Arthure*, vol. i. chap. xlv.

The minstrels of the Middle Ages vied with one another in narrating the adventures of these Arthurian knights. Some of those adventures doubtless are traditional, others were invented, and all expanded from time to time by later hands. Accounts of purely fictitious tournaments are inserted to give a fuller local colouring. Most of these interpolated stories may be regarded as episodes; but the two romances of Sir Launcelot and Sir Tristram are more than episodes. They form with the Arthurian romance proper the three parts of a great trilogy. Before the invention of sir Launcelot, sir Gawaine, the nephew of king Arthur, had been regarded as the pattern of the perfect knight, as he still is in our earlier ballads, and under the name of Gwalchmai in the tales of the Mabinogion, but afterwards, on the principle, I suppose, that there could not be two suns in one firma-

ment, he began to be depreciated. Faults were found for him, and his place was set much lower, though there are occasional flashes of his early grandeur. The original of sir Launcelot was Maelgwyn, king of Gwynedd or North Wales. Maelgwyn means the servant of the spear. The Norman minstrel translated this name into the more euphonious Lancelot or Launcelot, and gave to sir Launcelot a new parentage and a new home. He made him the son of king Ban of Benwick in Brittany. Courteous and frank, simple-minded, generous and brave, sir Launcelot is the typical Norman knight. No matter what his birthplace and his parentage, Welsh and Breton have no share in him, as they have in sir Tristram. For if Launcelot is the creation of a Norman, Tristram is of a Breton. It was the great success of the romance of Launcelot and Guenever which led to the invention of Tristram and Isolde (or Iseult). The name indeed of Drystan, Tristan, or Tristram, was earlier included among the Arthurian knights, but not among those of paramount importance. The romance of sir Tristram is in two parts, the continuation being the work of another hand. The birthplace of sir Tristram was the fabled land of Lyonnesse, which originally probably meant the district of Léonnois in Brittany, but in later tradition was taken to be that aprocryphal extension of Cornwall from the Lizard and Land's End to Scilly, which was afterwards submerged by a sudden irruption of the sea. This theme of a submerged land is common in Welsh tradition. There was another such between the points of Cardigan Bay. The original Drystan was a native of South Wales. The romance of sir Tristram is inconsistent in many respects with the earlier Arthurian romance. For instance the castle of Tyntagil is separated from the personal history of Arthur and becomes the residence of a new king of Cornwall, king Marke. Neither Lot nor Marke in the Morte d'Arthure are Bible names, the first is from the Celtic word meaning light and connected with Lewis; the second, which would more properly be written as Marc, is an old word

meaning horse. We still retain in common use its feminine, mare. Of all the new characters with which the romance of sir Tristram makes us acquainted the most interesting and life-like is sir Palomides, the Saracen, as he is called by a bold anachronism. The name is not a patronymic though it looks like one, it is really only a variant form of the Greek Palamedes, a well-known personage in the medieval version of the war of Troy. The long *e* of the penultimate has been changed modern fashion into short *i*. Sir Palomides was intended at first to serve only as a foil to sir Tristram, for sir Tristram to knock about and breathe himself on, as Oliver Proudfute breathed himself on his Saracen's head. But as the story developed his creator grew fond of him, and made more of him than he originally designed. He is conscious of this himself and even struggles against it: it makes the reader smile to see how often he warns him not to set sir Palomides too high. Sir Palomides is not faultless of course, it would have been rank heresy to have drawn a perfect paynim knight: but whether by accident or from real genius the fault fitted to him is exactly that to which a non-Christian and especially an Oriental would have been most naturally prone. He cannot bear that any knight shall be esteemed better than himself, and if he cannot assert his equality by fair means he will have recourse to foul. But the nearer he approaches to Christianity the more he strives against this vice, which he confesses and deplores, and in his last dealings with sir Tristram he behaves with much nobility. For the rest he is represented as a true and constant lover without hope of reward and a man of generous and kindly disposition. After he has been christened he loses his importance and practically passes out of the story.

PREFACE

THE subject of this poem is an incident in the *Morte d'Arthure* of Sir Thomas Malory, which was printed by Caxton in 1485. I subjoin the extract *in extenso*. It is a prose idyll simply told and of great beauty. There is a little confusion in one place, where by a copyist's carelessness or a printer's error the green shield with a white lion is given to the wrong knight, but that mistake the reader will easily rectify. Both here and *passim*, where I have occasion to refer to the *Morte d'Arthure*, I quote from Thomas Wright's reprint, 1858, of the last black-letter edition issued 1634. The spelling and phraseology of this edition of Charles the First's time are sufficiently archaic to be interesting, but not so much so as to render the text obscure or to become wearisome.

Morte d'Arthure, vol. ii. chap. clxvii. Faine they would have had sir Palomides to have abiden with them, but in no wise hee would not abide, and so hee departed and rode as adventures would guid him, till it was nigh noone. And then in a forrest by a well sir Palomides saw where lay a wounded knight, and his horse bound by him, which made the greatest dole that ever he heard man make, for ever hee wept and sighed as though hee would die. Then sir Palomides rode neere him, and saluted him mildly, and said, "Faire knight, why waile you so? Let mee lye downe and waile with you, for doubt ye not I am much more

heavier then ye are; for I dare say," said sir Palomides, "that my sorrow is an hundred fold more then yours is, and therefore let us complaine either to other." "First," said the wounded knight, "I require you to tell me your name, for and ye be none of the noble knights of the round table, ye shall never know my name, whatsoever come of me." "Faire knight," said sir Palomides, "such as I am, be it better or bee it worse, wit yee well that I am sir Palomides sonne and heire unto sir Astlabor, and sir Safire and sir Segwarides are my bretheren, and wit ye well as for my selfe I was never christned, but my two bretheren be truly christined." "Oh, noble knight," said that knight, "well is me that I have met with you, and wit ye wel that my name is sir Epinogris, the kings sonne of Northumberland. Now sit ye downe," said sir Epinogris, "and let us either complaine unto other." Then sir Palomides began his complaint. "Now shall I tell you," said sir Palomides, "what woe I endure. I love the fairest queene and lady that ever beare life, and wit yee well her name is La beale Isoud, king Markes wife of Cornewaile." "That is great folly" said sir Epinogris, "for to love queene Isoud, for one of the best knights in the world loveth her, that is sir Tristram de Liones." "That is truth," said sir Palomides, "for none knoweth that better then I doe, for I have beene in sir Tristrams fellowship this moneth, and La beale Isoud together. Alas!" said sir Palomides, "unhappie man that I am, now have I lost the fellowship of sir Tristram for ever, and the love of La beale Isoud for ever, and am never like to see her more; and sir Tristram and I bee either to other mortall enemies." "Well," said sir Epinogris, "sith that ye loved La beale Isoud, loved she you ever againe by anything that ye could thinke or wit, or else did ye ever rejoyce her in any pleasure?" "Nay, by my knighthood," said sir Palomides, "I never espied that ever shee loved mee more then all the world, nor never had I pleasure with her; but the last day she gave me

the foulest rebuke that ever I had, the which shall never goe from my heart, and yet I well deserved that rebuke, for I had not done knightly, and therefore I have lost the love of her and of sir Tristram for ever. And I have many times enforced myselfe to do many deeds for La beale Isouds sake, and she was the causer of my worship wining. Alas!" said sir Palomides, "now have I lost al the worship that ever I wan, for never shall befall mee such prowes as I had in the felowship of sir Tristram."

Chap. clxviii. "Nay, nay," said sir Epinogris, "your sorrow is but japes to my sorrow, for I rejoyced my lady and wan her with my hands, and lost her againe; alas, the day! Thus first I wan her," said sir Epinogris; "my lady was an earles daughter; and as this earle and two of his knights came from the turnement of Lonazep, and for her sake I set upon this earle and upon his two knights, my lady then being present, and so by fortune there I slew the earle and one of the knights, and the other knight fled, and so that night I had my lady; and on the morrow as shee and I tooke our rest by this well side, there came here unto me an arraunt knight, his name was sir Helior le Pruse, an hardy knight, and this same sir Helior chalenged mee for to fight for my lady. And then we went to battaile, first on horseback and then on foote; but at the last sir Helior wounded mee so sore that he left me for dead, and so hee tooke my lady with him. And thus my sorrow is farre more then yours, for I have rejoyced and yee rejoyced never." "That is truth," said sir Palomides, "but sith that I can never recover my selfe, I shall promise you if I can meete with sir Helior, I shall get you your lady againe or else he shall beate me." Then sir Palomides made sir Epinogris to take his horse, and so they rode unto an hermitage, and there sir Epinogris tooke his rest. And in the meane while sir Palomides walked privily for to rest him underneth the leaves; and there beside hee saw a knight come riding with a shield that hee had seene sir Ector de Maris beare afore hand, and there came after

him about ten knights, and so these ten knights hoved under the leaves for heate. And anon after there came a knight with a greene shield and therein a white lyon, leading a lady upon a palfrey. Then this knight with the greene shield, the which seemed to be master of the ten knights, rode fiersly after sir Helior, for it was he that had hurt sir Epinogris, and when he came nigh sir Helior, hee bad him defend his lady. "I will defend her," said sir Helior, "unto my power." And so they ranne together, so that either of these two knights smote other downe horse and all unto the ground, and then they gat up lightly and drew out their swords, and they lashed together mightily more then an houre. All this sir Palomides saw and beheld, but ever the knight with sir Ectors shield was bigger, and at the last this knight smote sir Helior downe, and then that knight unlaced his helme for to have stricken off his head; and then he cried mercy, and prayed him to save his life. Then sir Palomides dressed him upon his feete, for hee wist well that that said lady was sir Epinogris lady, and hee had promised him for to get her againe. Then sir Palomides went straight unto that lady, and tooke her by the hand, and asked her whether she knew one that hight sir Epinogris. "Alas!" said she, "that ever he knew me, or I him, for I have for his sake lost my lordship, and also his life that hee hath lost greeveth me most of all." "Not so, lady," said sir Palomides, "come on with me, for here is sir Epinogris in this hermitage." "Well is me," said the lady, "and he be on live." "Whether wilt thou with that lady?" said the knight with sir Ectors shield. "I will doe with her what mee list," said sir Palomides. "Wit thou wel," said that knight, "thou speakest over largely, as though thou seemest to have me at a vantage because thou sawest me doe battaile but late. Wenest thou, knight, to have that lady away from me so lightly? nay, thinke it never, and thou were as good a knight as sir Launcelot, or sir Tristram, or sir Palomides, but thou shalt winne her dearer then

ever did I." And so they went to battaile on foote, and there they gave many sad strooks, and each wounded other passing sore, and thus they fought still more then an houre. Then sir Palomides had marvaile what knight he might be that was so strong and so wel breathed, and thus said sir Palomides, "Knight, I require thee tell me thy name." "Wit thou wel," said that knight, "I dare tel thee my name, so that thou wilt tell me thy name." "I will," said sir Palomides. "Truly," said that knight, "my name is sir Safire, sonne unto king Astlabor, and sir Palomides and sir Segwarides are my bretheren." "Now wit you well my name is sir Palomides." Then sir Safire kneeled downe upon both his knees, and prayed him of mercie; and then they unlaced their helmes, and either kissed other weeping. And in the meane while sir Epinogris arose out of his bed, for hee heard them by the strookes; and so he armed him for to helpe sir Palomides if neede were.

Chap. clxix. And then sir Palomides tooke the lady by the hand and brought her unto sir Epinogris, and there was great joy betweene them, for either sowned for joy when they were met. "Faire knight and lady," said sir Safire, "it were pittie to depart you; Jesu send you joy either of other." "Gramercy, gentle knight," said sir Epinogris, "and much more thanke be unto my lord sir Palomides, the which thus hath through his prowesse made mee to get my lady." Then sir Epinogris required sir Palomides and his brother sir Safire for to ride with them unto his castle for the safegard of his person. "Sir," said sir Palomides, "we will be ready for to conduct you, for because that yee are so sore wounded." And so was sir Epinogris horsed, and his lady behind him, upon a soft ambling horse. And then they rode straight unto his castle, where they had good cheere, and were in joy as great as ever sir Palomides and sir Safire ever had in their life dayes. So on the morrow sir Palomides and sir Safire departed, and rode as fortune would lead them.

CANTO I

In the mid season of delicious May,
When budding hedgerows put forth fuller leaves,
And lambkins frisk, and amorous cushats play,
And homely swallows flit round manor eaves,
When cuckoo, cuckoo, calls the bird of spring,
And lovesick Philomel, at evening, grieves,
When airy lark and merry mavis sing,
And golden kingcups vie with daisies pied,
And lads and lasses dance in jocund ring;
On such a morn, an errant knight did ride,
In lucent arms, adown the woodland way,
Of stalwart mien, with plume of heron pride.
Featly he sate his barded charger grey.
Argent on sable, his indented shield
The dawn did hint at of the better day.
Full well he could his arms and knightly wield,
In joust, or tournament, or bannered war,
No laggard he, when battle trumpet pealed.

That arching forest spreadeth wide and far,
As jingling moves he down the long arcade,
Where the warm sunlight and the darker bar
Of shadowed oak-stems on brown earth are laid,
In patterned chequers, and the rustling trees,
Stirred by the light wind, cast a flickering shade.
But blithe the blackbird trills, in careless ease,
His heartsome carol; finch and tit and wren

And tuneful linnet joy with emulous glees.
The cooing wood-dove mourns, from neighbouring glen,
To mourning nest-mate; the shrill sentry jays,
With screech and clamour, sound alarm of men:
Look ho! yon stranger threads our wilding ways.
Then the tall hart in covert listening lies.
The startled coney peers, with curious gaze,
And dives in burrow. Each bright creature flies,
Save the grim wild-boar fierce in tusky pride,
That grunteth as he goes, with scorning eyes.

On blade and leaf the pearl-drop dew is dried.
The sun at height doth halve divided day,
When shortest shadows fall on northern side.
A well is seen beside the winding way,
Whose bubbling waters sparkle clear and brown,
Beneath a hawthorn, clothed with bloom of may,
An old, gnarled hawthorn, that pink snow snows down.
An open glade, as far as arrow's flight,
Coarse grasses and dependent blue-bells crown.
By that stone-well there sat a wounded knight.
To that gnarled thorn a noble steed was tied,
Caparisoned for war, and richly dight.[1]
Great dole and sorrow made that knight, and sighed,
And wrung his hands, and uttered sore lament,
With weeping cheer, as he had almost died,
So great his grief and bitter miscontent.
"Ah, woeful day! Ah, miserable spite!
Foul morn hath ravished what sweet eve but lent.
Unhappy that I am! Ill-fortuned wight!
Who could not keep, what I had boldly won.
All bliss is ended. Sinks in starless night
Of high felicity my glorious sun.
I did, at evensong, account me blest.
Now sorrow is my fellow. Joy is done."

The passing knight drew bridle, and addressed
That other with mild words of courtesy:
"Fair Sir, who grief distillest from sad breast,

How do men name thee? Sapling of what tree?
Hurt hast thou taken. Tell me by whose hand.
Yea! let me sadly sit and plain with thee,
Who seemest as enrolled of sorrow's band.
One of that dismal fellowship am I,
And bear the banner of that clouded land.
Here let us sit, and sigh respond to sigh,
By each to other the sad tale be told.
My grief is greater than thy grief, pardie!
My grief is greater, by an hundredfold,
I dare to say it, bear I heavier load.
Together let us sit and plain on mould."

Then answered he who sate to him who rode:
"Sir, for thy complaisance I thank thee well,
And grieve, if thou hast prick of sorrow's goad,
Even as I. But I will never tell
To mere chance stranger, how men name my name,
Though therefore with cold death I darkling dwell;
Save only he be found of such as claim
To sit with Arthur at the Table Round,
Who with fair service worship noble dame,
The weak do comfort, and set free the bound;
Who ride abroad redressing human wrong,
Maintain the right, and tyrant force confound."

"Sir," said the first knight, "I, good truth, belong
To Court of Arthur, and Round Table, both;
There sit I honoured, amid honoured throng.
Such as I am, I will declare, not loath,
My name and lineage, for my deeds men know;
For knightly have I kept my knighthood's oath.
With spear and sword through many lands I go,
I did not waste in dull, inglorious, ease
My flower of manhood, and I fear no foe.
Not native here. Beyond the bounding seas
And desert wastes, in land of Orient morn,
In a fair vale, fulfilled of fertile trees,
Well watered, rich in grass and waving corn,

Sir Astlabor, my sire, of kingly race,
Begat me, of three sons his eldest-born;
Where, seen afar, the high and mystic place,
Where four fair fountains spring from guarded steep,
But angel warders watch the mountain face,
And sword of flame doth that pass perilous keep
To the fair tree, remeid of Adam's woe,[2]
That none so hardy may that harvest reap.
Secure he dwells, he dwells in valley low,
In a fair mansion, in a pleasant mead,
Sir Astlabor, my sire, where waters flow.
Great wealth he hath, he many knights doth lead,
With lance and broadsword he can grimly smite.
My gracious mother held the better creed.
The fire my father worshipped, and the light.
My brethren twain are christened, but not I,
Who wander still, uncertain of the right.
Yet Christ I love, and do not all deny,
And Mary, flower of maidenhood and queen.
What lacketh these will of sweet ruth supply.
My lance is sharp, my biting sword is keen.
In battle mêlée give and take I wound,
A paynim knight, but not of paynim spleen,
And chosen peer of glorious Table Round.
With Launcelot, or with Tristram, spear in rest,
I match me, such alone mine equals found.
In kingly courts, at times, a welcome guest,
By wood and wold and marsh and mountain fell,
The beast that questeth I pursue, the quest[3]
King Pellinore once chased, but might not quell;
In rear a lion, and in flank a pard,
With snaky head and neck of sinuous swell,
And hoof of hart to gallop long and hard;
In Selwood Forest that ill year espied,
When forth from life Pendragon Uther fared,
By weeping princes borne, in armoured pride,
To the cold grave and high embattled tomb,
Where he doth sleep. But Heaven askance hath eyed
This mourning land. That sign of darkening doom,

An evil portent and a dire presage,
Bodes what I know not, which doth dimly loom.
This noisome beast doth bay from belly's cage,
As many hounds in tangled coppice bay,
With eager roar, and stir from deep umbrage
The stately hart, which they have marked to slay.
Noisy she moves. Whene'er her steps are stayed,
Her womb is still, she doth those hell-hounds lay.
Of honour urged, and knighthood's noble trade,
Which deed adventurous doth and danger woo,
I cast about, and seek that worm to invade,
So Heaven me help, and Merlin's rede fall true!
Thus deem: Palomides, that proven knight,
Am I, who many deeds of daring do;
My brethren twain, one bold sir Safire hight,
The younger is the gentle Segwaride,
Both seemly, both of ladies the delight."
He ceased. That other, seated by the side
Of that fair well, on pleasant, grassy, knoll,
Did wondering hear, and courteous he replied:
" All-worthy knight, of high aspiring soul
And valorous act, of worship well renowned,
So set on high in knighthood's honoured roll!
Ah, well is me! to meet on Logrian ground[4]
The noble sir Palomides. Full fain
Am I to hear and listen to thy sound."

Such laud did high Palomides disdain:
" Fair sir, enough, too much, of courtesy.
To praise in absence, greater is the gain.
In faceward praise doth vain lipservice lie.
An after harvest rather of men's praise
I covet most, to live when I shall die."

" Fair sir," his fellow answered, " for thy bays
Live long, and will not wither. But now know,
Whence I, ill-starred, my birth and lineage trace.
Far hence to north a mighty stream doth flow,
Where mouldering ramparts girdle the strait land,

A Roman work, wrought many years ago.
There, in fair castle, ruleth with firm hand
King Clariance. Well and justly he doth sway,
Now touched with age, forgetful of the brand.
When Lot and Urien rode, and great array
Of the wild north, in Arthur's rising hour,[5]
With them he rode, at Bedgraine, on that day,
When North and South contended for the power,
And wood and water echoed to the din,[6]
And many died in dreadful battle stour.[7]
Much glory there did my strong father win.
But after, when in mêlée proud Lot died,
His friendship first with Arthur did begin.
His son am I, from Strath of pleasant Clyde,
That woeful prince Epinogris am I,
Who now with sorrow mate me for my bride."

Outspake the son of Astlabor: "Thus high
Thy parentage, an eagle of the sun!
Look thy fair deeds match well thine ancestry.
For churlish baseness gentilhood should shun,
And garden flower be more than common weed;
Yet sometimes doth the bowl at bias run,
And generous sire beget degenerate breed,
And lofty merit seed in shepherd cot,
That man may know him master of his deed."

"Nay, sir," said sir Epinogris, "God wot,
I keep the bird within me without stain.
My father's scutcheon smutched is with no blot.
Come, grieve we, linked in brotherhood of pain.
Alight thou. Leave thy charger. Sit thou there.
And, side by side, let each with other plain.
Unfold thou first the canker of thy care;
And I will after voice aloud my teen,
Which, in sad heart, I sorrowfully bear."
So sighing he, from mossy hillock green,
Epinogris, that young and comely knight,
Sore-wounded, sad, in soft and silvan scene.

Forthwith doth sir Palomides alight.
He waters his proud war-horse at that well,
And bids him feed, and draws the girth less tight.
Then sits him down, with dole, in greenwood dell,
On blue-bell bed, beneath the bloom of may;
The wind-borne fragrance floateth, with sweet smell,
In the pure air, and Zephyr breezes stray,
With fitful sonance, among whispering leaves,
Even as ocean, when, in summer play,
In cadenced motion, its soft bosom heaves;
Thin cloudlets sparsely fleck the heaven with white.
Glad earth rejoiceth, yet he tristful grieves.
"Sir," he began, "if love and joy unite,
No better boon fair Fortune can bestow,
When love and joy their troth together plight.
Love without joy is lamentable woe.
And joyless love, such evil hap is mine.
In mourning weed, through life, uncheered I go.
How shall I paint my mistress? Her bright eyne
Transcend the lustre of the starry lights.
Slender and tall, her aspect is divine.
Her stately presence awe and love incites.
Her gracious look enkindleth sweet desire.
To loving kiss her ruby lip invites.
For her I burn in slow and wasting fire.
For her sweet sake I travail and endure,
Great deeds I do, to greater deeds aspire.
She is to me my beacon and my lure;
For her with honour strive I to be crowned,
And worship her with perfect thought and pure.
Sir, I have told, how born on Orient ground
Of noble house, for countries, which men name
From Cadmus daughter, changed I Asian bound.
When first to coast of christened folk I came,
I passed through Italy, then eke through Spain,
Whence, when I heard of deeds of northern fame,
Ship took I, and was borne o'er wind-tossed main,[8]
There landed, where the sea-wave laps the hold,
Where Agusance, that Irish prince, doth reign.

There was I lodged, there loved his child Isolde,
In her first bud, and blushing maidenhood,
Dark-eyed, with snooded locks of ruddy gold.
Her father loved me. For her love I sued;
But coldly she repulsed my proffered truth,
Nor hearkened to my love-plaint oft renewed."

"Ah, sir," said sir Epinogris, "in sooth,
Great folly 'tis to set thine aim so high.
She loves sir Tristram, on none else hath ruth."

"Who better knows that? Who knows that as I,"
Said sir Palomides, "who late have been
In her and gentle Tristram's company?
Love is a seedling, which takes root unseen
Within life's garden, and unconscious grows,
For bliss or sorrow. Whence we do not ween,
Nor ken we whither. Till my story close,
I can but love her, while, in pulsing vein,
The coral life-drop with warm current flows."
He paused a little, then he spake again:
"Ah, woe is me! to see her nevermore.
Ah, woe is me! to part in such disdain.
When last we parted, she rebuked me sore.
Deserved rebuke. I do mine error know,
The fault of envy, which infects my core.
Unknightly dealt I, not as noble foe,
Who, to my rival grudging ampler praise,
Had struck, at Lonazep, a shameful blow.
With gentle Tristram such is now my case,
As mortal opposites we two must stand,
At time ordained, in some appointed place,
With spear sharp-grinded and with trenchant brand;
And one shall perish, peradventure I,
For I do feel me by that man outmanned,
Who dread not much, nor much desire, to die.
I neither seek, nor will avoid, my bane.
But sleep is welcome, if to sleep be nigh."

Thus did the proud Palomides complain,
Who loved, and found no response to his love.
Then sir Epinogris: "Sir, Heaven thee sain[9]
From such ill combat! and love kindlier prove!
Like genders like, and loving love should find.
Of sorrow only was thy tale inwove?
Thy sweet queen, Isolde, was she never kind?
Might no soft touch, or smile, or gentle tone,
Assuage for thee the yearning of thy mind?"

"Ah, no!" replied he with despondent groan.
"I sow, but gather in my barn no sheaf.
The joy, the gladness, I have never known.
Not mine such solace, such divine relief.
No, by my knighthood, what the sweetness is
I taste not, but I taste the bitter grief.
No pleasant token, or love-seal, I wis,
Can my soul treasure. Tristram shot the gold.
We meaner archers did but aim amiss.
His sunshine only thawed her winter cold.
Our feebler starlight paled in Tristram's hour.
In loving clasp he can alone enfold,
And sole hath access to her silken bower,
As hallowed image, set in holy shrine,
Lord of her life, and absolute in power."

"But, oh! thy sorrow is a jest to mine,"
Said sir Epinogris. "'Tis light to lose
The thing, which is not, and which was not thine.
But ladies, as they list, will pick and choose.
Thine would not, mine surrendered all her soul.
My wound is deeper, sorer far my bruise.
Tribute thou renderest. I have taken toll.
An hungered art thou, but I feasted well.
Thou thirstest. I have drunk of honeyed bowl.
Without thou standest. I did inward dwell.
Thou knockest, but the door is closed and barred.
I was admitted to most secret cell.
I do not say but what thy lot is hard.

Great dolour hast thou, but oh! not as I:
Love looked upon thee with austere regard.
But I have soared, as Icarus, on high.
My waxen wings are melted, and I fall
Into this sea of trouble, where I lie,
Who deemed on mounting pinions to forestall
The life of gods, but I have toppled down.
The surging billows mock my wailing call.
Lo! like the son of Daedalus I drown.
Be this mine epitaph by lovers said:
Here lies Epinogris of fair renown,
Who Fortune tempted, and who foully sped;
All gentle ladies and all lovers true,
Weep o'er him, who, Love's martyr, 'neath is dead.
Sweet sir, upon my sorrow, prithee, rue,
Of thy great gentleness, for thou hast known
That barb, which pierceth thine own bosom through.
One maiden fairer than her fellows shone,
One maiden, as a bright, translucent, star,
And her I loved, and worshipped her alone;
And she did set me by her side, not far;
But feudal hatred hindered nearer ties;
Betwixt our houses cometh angry jar;
From simple cause doth great discordance rise,
One peasant churl, in private quarrel slain,
Was friendship's rift, and sundered old allies.
Then counter banners float on bloody plain,
Then raid and foray lead on dire debate;
Much harm they wrought, and we much harm again.
Love's voice is mute amid relentless hate.
In vain I seek, in vain for favour sue;
Ofttimes I strive to burst the prison gate,
Where her stern father doth her closely mew;
In vain I strive. They hold her guarded well,
Her kith and kindred, where I may not view.
Until, at Lonazep, it late befell,[10]
Imperial Arthur, lord of armies, made
A noble tournament. Thy words me tell,
How thou wast present, where strong champions played,

And doughty spearmen splintered ashen spears,
For ladies' love, and honour's winsome grade."

"Ay," quoth he, "but against the Southron peers,
For greater worship, chose I weaker side,
With the North kings, and freed their soul from fears,
Where the Round Table held the field in pride,
Of foul discomfiture full sore adread.
Great joy they had of my strong might allied."

"Sir, tell me," sir Epinogris then said,
"I would not, for a cause I had, be seen,
So went not thither, who the vaward led,
Who bare them bravest; for good knights, I ween,
Companion Arthur, and as good, I dare
Well say this, exercise on northern green."

"Sir," he made answer, "many knights there were,
Who bore them bravely, many knights did well;
The foremost honour three divided share.
With glorious Arthur such as southward dwell
Of winding Trent, on Severn's hither side,
And that Companionship, ordained to quell
The ranker mischief of this lawless tide,
The Table Round, except some ten alone,
In haughty challenge these the world defied.
On adverse part each prop of outland throne,
The spears of Scotland, Listenoise, Surluse,[11]
North Wales and Ireland, big men, large of bone,
But less in number, of less practised use.
I better love to battle with the strong;
The Northern partnership for this I choose;
Not that I willed to do my liege-lord wrong.
With changed device, in other arms I came,
Unknown at first, but recognised ere long.
I will record my worship and my blame.
Upon the morning of our first assay
None knightlier rode, or smote with surer aim,
Where chosen champions did their pageant play.

Enough. The rider and the managed steed
Went down before me. Hurled on earth they lay.
My gracious lady vieweth all my deed,
Whom I beholding put forth fuller might;
Mine the fair wreath and honourable meed,
And sounding heralds dub me peerless knight.
At eve we feast, and merry wine doth flow,
And minstrel harpings breathe with soft delight.
Heaven's million lamps are lit with twinkling glow.
Now drowsy slumber steals on sealéd eyes,
Till rosy dawn in brightening East doth show,
And golden Titan bids us rathe to rise,
And, armed, on horseback, wait the stirring sound
Of call to lists, and act of bold emprise.
Sir Tristram, galled I had such glory found
Before his queen, and stood in loftier place,
Bestirs him much. He doth outpass old bound.
No more Palomides is common phrase.
A Tristram, Tristram, do the vulgar cry.
Black envy moves me, where I hovering gaze.
On hoof of thunder sweep they proudly by,
The pluméd horsemen, and with echoing crash
In centre meet. Stout spears in shivers fly.
A hundred falchions gleam with lightning flash.
I Tristram see. By many knights bestead,
At bay he standeth. Steel on steel doth clash.
Then thought I, with new shock and onset dread,
To level him in dust, with fall of shame,
Thus plotting to bring low that noble head,
Thus, as a craven, stooped to deed of blame.
Ill was my purpose, yet I nought prevail.
I, who will minish, have made more his fame.
He doth withstand, and mine attempt doth fail.
Like lead within me the remembrance weighs.
He hath reward, but I have grievous bale.
He forth from peril plucks the flower of praise.
The trumpet flourish setteth him on high;
The seemly coronal his brow doth grace,

"But, ah! my lady did mine act espy.
In scornful anger bitter word she said.
She doth forbid, that I approach her nigh.
Alas! for now Palomides is sped.
My sun is clouded, and the radiant light,
My foot which guided, mist is o'er it spread.
Her gracious visage was my spring of might.
Her perfect loveliness did point my spear,
And urge my charger, edge my sword in fight.
Now she, my lady, looks with altered cheer.
Such anger in her heart my mistress hath,
That I, her servant, have both scathe and fear.
Isolde, my lodestar upon peril's path,
My scythe no longer can avail to reap
E'en the poor harvest of late aftermath.
Then, woe is me! for very woe I weep,
To vex her so, who was my worship's cause,
Cast down, and suddenly, from zenith steep,
To the low nadir all my greatness draws.
Withouten her I shall not after weave
An equal crown, nor win a like applause.
Such mighty gestes I may no more achieve,
As then I wrought, and did all else outvie,
For she is wroth, whereat I inly grieve,
And am as one, who is at point to die.
Discard thine armour, wear unwarlike weed,
Palomides, put lance and buckler by.
For kindly pardon hast thou face to plead?
That hope is founded upon shifting sand.
She will not hearken, no, she will not heed.
Ay, self-attainted, at the bar I stand,
And wait not on another's word of doom,
But hold the balance in unswerving hand,
And pass my sentence. Certes, in that tomb
Mine older labour and renown I lay,
Nor henceforth shall I fill so large a room.
Not thus that gentle combatant, I say,
Sir Tristram, nor the light of Armorice,
Sir Launcelot, in tilt-yard, or stern fray,

Had borne him, whose great soul doth greatness please
In his kenned rival, nor young Lamoracke, slain,
But e'en now, promise which outpromised these,
In treacherous ambush all untimely ta'en
By spears of Orkney for their sire laid low
By Pellinore's strong hand, his issue's bane.
A seeming knight, and fair in outward show,
I did a deed a good knight doth not do;
Hence I divided to myself am foe,
And, tried by touch-stone, prove, in part, untrue.
Yet let repentance some forgiveness find.
Sweet Lethé, for my fault lend fountains new."

He weeping ended, and the dying wind
Commingled in his moan with softest sighs.
But soon is pity born in gentle mind.
Like moisture leaketh from his fellow's eyes.
A little sir Epinogris doth muse,
Then maketh answer merciful and wise:
" Sir knight, his full indulgence to refuse,
Hard were his heart, who hearken to thy tale.
But I do neither judge thee, nor accuse.
For erring mortals, set in earthly vale,
On failures upward as a stair-way rise
To better things, yet is their best but frail.
If men, in part, be children of the skies,
With the pure metal mixeth the base clay;
In human strength so much of weakness lies.
Thou dost repent thee. Go no more astray.
Retrieve thine error. Cleave unto the right.
Thy foot, which stumbled, rule in ordered way.
One cloud, that passeth, is no darksome night.
Not on the Fiend's accusatory scroll
Such fault is written, as our tears make white.
Then lay this unction to thy troubled soul;
God doth not judge, and good men judge as He
By deed done singly, but by balanced whole.
Yet, of thy nobleness, thy nature free
From root of envy, that ignoble vice,

And christened virtue graft on paynim tree.
What princely jewel, or what pearl of price,
Be thine, another may possess that too;
Weigh thou his merit in a poise as nice;
Give others, and accept thine equal due.
Fair is thy fruitage. Keep it free from blight.
With goodly blossom still thy branch renew.
Thus will thy lady find in thee delight,
And, though she love not, nor old love resign,
Will joy her well to see thy name at height,
Will share thy greatness, in thy grace will shine.
Then spur thy spirit. Cast loth thought away.
Look not behind thee, but regard thy fine.
But, sir, in arms of courtesy, thy play
Was first accounted worthy the fair crown;
The might of Tristram, on the second day,
O'ershadowed in eclipse thine earned renown;
Who was the third, to parallel ye twain,
On listed field when the last sun looked down?"

The knight of Orient took the word again:
"Askest thou? Know, sir Launcelot was there,
Who doth himself of nobleness refrain,
And willeth all his own high honour share.
So firm he standeth, he can largesse deal,
Nor aught is lessened, if he labour spare.
Where fiery knights did strive with emulous zeal,
Two days sir Launcelot scarce laid lance in rest;
The third, last, morning, sheathed in shining steel,
He rideth, Launcelot, by his deed confessed.
What other knight as Launcelot is strong,
Or buckleth corselet on as bold a breast?
Who better breathed, or can endure so long,
That dare a course with Launcelot to ride?
The goodliest man in hall, his peers among,
In graceful dance he mannerly doth glide,
The meekest knight, that comes in ladies' bower,
But sternest foe, by mortal foe defied."

Quoth he from northward : " For himself is flower
Of knighthood, and the pink of courtesy,
Most terrible of all in battle hour,
Yet fulfilled of each gentle quality.
In him doth lovely portraiture appear
Of virtues and high rule of chivalry."

" That non-pareil, unto whom none is near ;
Neither the lord of Lyonnesse, nor I,
Nor any knight, who beareth sword and spear,"
Quoth sir Palomides, " can reach so high.
His the third chaplet, worn on worthiest head.
His title none so hardy to deny.
My say is spoken, for my lips have said,
In answer to the question thou didst frame,
In that fair tournament who foremost led,
And won great worship, triple cord of Fame,
Sir Launcelot and sir Tristram ; deem thou me
Third, if not equal, yet of equal name.
Others, beside, did win the good degree,
Proved knights, on either part, a glorious few,
These honour have, but are not as the three.
But, gentle sir, I would entreat anew,
Thy broken story that thou piece again.
Thy gracious mistress hadst thou grace to view ?
Or pinest still in unrewarded pain ?
Of knightly courtesy, what more befell
Let mine ear gather, for I hear thee fain."

CANTO II

"Fair sir, with weeping I my story tell,"
Made answer sir Epinogris, "for great
His grief, who late with happiness did dwell,
When changing Fortune hath impaired his state,
Who looks afar upon an Eden lost,
And cannot enter, cast without the gate.
By sore mishap was my brief gladness crossed.
In golden noon who doth expect murk night?
In all my sorrow this me vexeth most,
I quaffed a goblet of such sweet delight;
But that is broken. Oh, surpassing teen
Joy to remember, which is passed from sight!
The lady Guenever, that glorious queen,
Heard of my mistress, how divinely fair,
And she would see her. Then, arrayed in sheen,
To court of Arthur must my love repair,
When sceptred Arthur came his court to hold
At Lonazep, and breathe this rougher air.
Her father, with two knights, his henchmen bold,
Composed her escort, nor with larger train.
I heard, a little bird me tidings told.
Then schemed I desperate scheme my love to gain.
When she from Lonazep her homeward way
Should take, I waited her in hollow lane.
My sudden onset did their souls dismay.
That grey-haired chief I overbore in fight.
One knight I slew. Upon cold earth these lay.

The third abode not, nor withstood my might,
But looked on his companions starkly laid,
Then turned him, cowardlike, to recreant flight.
A gentle gaoler, thus I captive made
My willing captive, who, with sweet consent,
Companioned me, last night, in greenwood shade.
In her I joyed, and she was well content.
The smiling stars looked down from heaven above,
The traitor stars, nor did their ire relent.
When dewy dawn awoke from couch of love,
Then we strayed hither, here, awhile, did stay;
A garland of bright flowers my darling wove,
Withal to deck her. She doth musing say:
What gladness 'twere together aye to dwell
In this sweet spot, and while long hours away;
Thou venison fetch, but I, in rustic cell,
A cottage mistress, milk my lowing kine,
My she-goats tend, and spin, till curfew bell
Doth call to sleep, and loving arms to twine,
Far from rude war, or pomp and pageant show,
Thine only, dearest heart, entirely thine.
I something answered, what I hardly know,
Part dozing, half in earnest, half in jest,
And was enfolded within arms of snow,
When softly to her lips my lips I pressed.
But lo! her palfrey gave a whinnying neigh,
At hoofs approaching, and I sprang from rest.
An errant knight, adown the leafy way,
Came pricking. By his arms of orange hue
I knew him, stalwart knight on battle day,
Sir Helior, whom crape-mantled widows rue;
So many widows his right hand hath made,
So many good knights set 'neath churchyard yew.
He saw. With sudden check his steed he stayed,
Crying: *I challenge thee weapon to wield,*
Thou knight, who bearest, for device displayed,
Argent and azure, upon bended shield,
That ridest in such gentle company.
Do battle, or with shame thy damosel yield.

Let none presume he hath his fair in fee.
He must defend, and hold at point of glaive.
Such custom rules in million-leafèd tree.
Such wont is prevalent in woodland cave.
It is the high prerogative of might,
That beauty render homage to the brave.
This ancient privilege and natural right,
Sweet lady, see thou dare not to disdain;
Submit, and in submission learn delight,
And ride, obedient, by thy master's rein,
This present lord, if he with falchion keep;
If not, accept upon thy neck new chain:
In other couch thou wilt as softly sleep,
Partake in other arms of equal bliss,
And drink of pleasures from a well as deep.

"Thus arrogant he spake, but spake amiss
Is woman but a chattel to be sold?
Can force compel her to so dear a kiss?
She spurneth for her love the miser's gold,
The rich man's heritage, the long descent,
All other goods she doth as baubles hold,
With the fruition of one love content,
Yet loveth well she may her lover choose,
And decketh him with gauds herself hath lent,
Nor careth, if a world for love she lose.
Wroth if another hold her beauty cheap,
She hateth him, who confidently woos.
I heard, and harnessed did on horseback leap,
In furious anger and fierce joy of fight:
The field I planted shall no stranger reap,
Nor spoiler enter. Peace, thou braggart knight.
In arms I won her, and with arms will hold.
No proud usurper shall usurp my right.
We parted, and did wheel on grassy mould,
And fetched a compass, and, two knights of pride,
Shocked each with other. Horse and horseman rolled.
Both fell together; we so fierce did ride.
Soon up we started, and on foot drew near,

In hands of craftsmen the brown broadsword plied.
That gentle lady shrieked with dole and fear.
As iron on anvil, steel on harness rang.
'Fore God, he was my peer and more than peer,
Where shield on stricken shield did hoarsely clang:
We traced, we traversed, then, in joining close,
He smote me, from my side the red blood sprang.
Forfoughten, overcome of grievous blows,
I sink, and swoon upon the ground as dead.
Sir Helior nothing doth regard my woes.
By hard constraint is my sweet mistress led,
Full loath, and streaming from her eyes salt tears
For her lost lord and broken bridal bed.
In boding thought, and full of anxious fears,
She weeps to follow, looking oft again:
Help, help she waileth, yet no help appears.
Ah, woeful lady! more than all my pain
I feel thine anguish, comfortless, alone.
Now doth thy ravisher thy glory stain.
His loathed embraces must thou bear, mine own,
And shrinking shudder: *Would to God, 'twere he,*
My lord, my lover! sad in silent moan.
Thou must endure, and tearful grieve for me.
But I, sweet heart, I would have gladlier died
In the hot fight, than live apart from thee.
Would Heaven I were, where sorrow doth not bide,
In the chill grave, lapped in oblivion kind,
Nor had awaked, but my last sigh outsighed!
When sense revived, I did me mateless find,
Here, by this well. Afar my love was gone.
Lo, there! the garland she did weave and bind
For her brown tresses, and so late did on,
Fallen from her temples. As that pretty flower
My bloom is faded, to the seed-pod run.
Ah me! that mourning mine eyes see this hour.
Alas! that I have lived this hour to see.
Love's sugared sweetness is but bitter sour;
Love's fruit but ashes, plucked from baleful tree,
Apples of Sodom, o'er whose curséd mere

Wings float not, nor within it fin dives free.
Whither me turn? Can I forget my dear?
When I forget her, be my name forgot.
But how without her bear my wonted cheer?
Beloved I was. That doth avail no jot.
Oh! lighter load, if I had loved in vain.
Oh! happier tokening, had I loved her not."

Thus he made end, and tears, in briny rain,
Wash the wan paleness of his comely cheek,
Beneath that thorn, where he hath wounded lain,
Whose snow-white blossoms, tinged with rose-red streak,
Fall, one by one, as though the bleeding tree
Wept for his sorrow, who there sate so weak.
Palomides, that lord of high degree,
The pearl-like burden of his laden eyes
Dischargeth, then, anon, in words saith he:
"Sweet sir, within me such a tide doth rise,
And swell of pity, that I needs must weep.
Thy grief is greater than my vain surmise.
The road thou travellest is rough and steep,
So hedged with briers, that thy pain is more
Than mine, although my pain lie very deep.
Ah! but I know not. For the golden ore
Thine hand did excavate from loveliest mine.
Rich treasure didst thou dig, much precious store.
Possession and delight of love were thine.
Her honeyed lip thou hast had leave to press;
Her slender waist she granted to confine.
But I can think upon no fond caress.
To me my mistress is averse and cold.
I know not therefore, which in sorer stress
Is set. In arms if I might only hold,
She look into mine eyes with loving eyes,
On after loss I could adventure bold.
My hope is dead. It nevermore may rise,
Nor I recover me. Thine is not vain.
Thine doth but sleep, and sleep with morning flies.
When the night endeth, it will wake again.

By Love, and by my lady's lily hand,
I make avow, I will myself be slain,
Or loose thy dear one from dishonouring band,
When, casting round, I this sir Helior meet,
This felon knight, who wrongeth all the land.
Sir, spare to thank. By pledge of knighthood sweet,
Such obligation on my shoulder lies,
The proud oppressor from his unjust seat
To hale, whose captive for deliverance cries,
And damosel from outrage done or planned
Of ravisher to wrest and shameful ties.
Then I will search with buckler, spear, and brand,
And, as thy proxy, make this dame my quest;
Nor think I long sir Helior's state will stand,
When brought by me, Palomides, to test,
But he shall fall, and thy sweet bride be free,
And thou, within her arms engirdled, rest.
When ye, twin yokefellows, in bond agree,
And I reknit the severed cord anew,
Ye will, belike, with kindness think on me;
Then say: *Palomides, that lover true,*
In handfast union, for his lady's sake,
And for dear Love's sake, made us one of two.
He thirsteth, yet his welling fount doth slake
Our drought, and we have drunken deep by him.
Our cup is filled from his abundant lake.
Take courage. Fortune is of fickle whim.
Thou hast but tasted of thy goodly vine,
Who yet shalt gather, when I prune this limb,
The full, ripe, vintage of her golden wine.
Ye shall rejoice, and I rejoice to see,
Who find, mayhap, in other's good hap mine.

"But, gentle knight, with foot, that wandereth free,
In thorny maze unwitting path I take,
I ken not whither, beneath arching tree.
By shady dell I pass and ferny brake,
Nor skill to know of any harbour nigh.
Thou needest harbour for thy wound's harsh ache.

Sweet salves thou needest, and on couch to lie,
And cooling simples, that will rage abate
Of fever heat, within thy veins too high.
Speak, art thou cognisant of some near gate,
Within which sojourneth, in woodland wild,
Not rudely nurtured, nor of savage state,
A gentle shepherd and of nature mild,
If such a shepherd dwell in lowly cot,
Or churl in grange, with grossness undefiled?"

The son of Clariance said: "Sir, well I wot,
There is a hermit hath his lodging near,
Who chose, with greyer years, the better lot,
And cowl and staff for helm and outworn spear.
Well built his cottage, roofed with thatch of reed;[1]
Nor rain, nor winter, he need, house-warm, fear.
On roots and cresses he doth simply feed,
Which grow spontaneous, or his hands let grow,
Nor willeth for his maw one creature bleed.
Beside his door, a brook of limpid flow
With cup of innocence his lack supplies;
Ne wine nor cider doth his chalice know.
Above his casements, with aspiring rise,
A climbing rose and honeysuckle meet,
A jasmine, twined on fret of trellised ties,
O'erlaps the portal of his lone retreat;
There bloom, within his garden, posies gay,
The gillyflower, the tender marguerite,
Shy violets, lilies white as sea-foam spray,
The dainty clove-pink, with its breath of spice,
Jonquil, and heart's-ease, that glad eye of day.
His grafted pippins promise fruit of price,
And juicy sallets, with unharmful meat,
To year-long table of his Lent suffice.
When he, that anchorite, with sandalled feet,
Doth walk abroad, yclad in russet weed,
The gentle wood-birds him melodious greet,
God's servitor, who tells the constant bead,
And saith his oraisons. Not long the road,

This winding track unto the bourne will lead
Of hospitable host and sought abode.
The shadow scarce will on the dial change,
Ere we reach thither." Thus he, pointing, showed.

Uprisen, doth sir Palomides arrange
His horse's furniture, draw tight the band,
Next looseth with his hands the charger strange,
And, in strong arms uplifting from the land
The grievous burden of the wounded knight,
Hath set on steed, and given him rein in hand.
Then taketh lance, and into saddle light
He vaulteth, all in armour, from the ground.
His pawing courser, in rejoicing might,
With arching neck, and high curvetting bound,
Pranceth, but bridling curb abates his pride
To sober pace and hoof-fall's measured sound.
" Have patience, sith it is not far to ride;
Ere chime of vesper, think, at ease, to lie
On tended couch." Thus he; that other sighed:
" My wound so smarteth, that almost I die.
Great is my travail." " Yet," his fellow said,
" Endure a little, for thy rest is nigh.
Who ride on errand sleep in evil bed,
And cross and iron hardship learn to bear,
Grim strokes they take, no whit of death adread,
For maim and bloodlet they should lightly care:
Whoso would aim at wearing laurel crown
Of high adventure must all hazards dare.
For honour is not laid on bed of down,
Nor is it lapped in a luxurious sheet:
Each man, with hands, must earn his own renown,
In toil and danger, thorough cold and heat,
Antæus-like to draw from earth again
Fresh hope and courage out of borne defeat."

Then both were silent. Not in soul was fain
The youthful prince, that heritor of Clyde,
His bowing head drooped low on tossèd mane,
He swerveth in his seat from side to side,

Oft groaning, on his brow great sweat-drops stand,
So weak, on horseback he can ill abide.
With sir Palomides, in forest land,
He joggeth, underneath the leafy screen,
Where spreading boughs with vault of arch have spanned
The fret-work ceiling and high roof of sheen,
With armour jangle, and with cadenced ring
Of timéd hoof-beats in a world of green,
That hour of hours, when summer lends to spring,
Ere red-eyed Sirius hath drunk full dyke dry,
When beady dews forbear with frost to sting,
When grass in meadow groweth lush and high,
But rich-hued foxgloves flaunt at coppice side,
And gauzy mayflies flit each lakelet nigh,
When hum of bees is brisk at morning tide,
And hive is full, and ewes in pasture bleat,
When armoured trout disport by water-slide,
And sunny lawns are bathed in summer heat,
When frolic June is borne in lap of May,
And life is love, and love itself more sweet.

Where lichened boulders strew the mossy way,
And winnowed light, through colander of shade,
Hath dimmer semblance, as of twilight grey,
They pass, with solemn pace, by columned glade;
Long shadowed aisles, on either hand, stretch wide,
Where thorn and bracken are, the wild thing's aid.
Wolf, shepherd's unfriend, in that growth, doth hide;
There slinketh reynard, the deceiver sly;
The lissome adder doth, unnoted, glide;
The green-hued lizard with green foliage vie;
Harmless wood-urchin and wise badger stray,
Invisible, and stoat of cruel eye.
The squirrel, perched amid the broad-leaved spray
Of well grown chestnut, frisketh danger-free;
The sweet birds warble for the gladsome day,
Beneath in underwood, aloft on tree,
For summer fulness, and the fond delights
Of home and nestlings, they sing merrily.

Move, with soft amble, the companion knights,
Uphill and down, in that rough thoroughfare,
Hear forest sounds, and look on forest sights.
Red-robinhood and golden-rod are there,
And honeyed comfrey, loved of housewife bee,
The lady-fern, the graceful maidenhair,
Orchis, on mystic leaf indelibly
Inscribed with hieroglyph of Sibyl pen,
Eglantine, clematis, and briony,
And comely night-shade, that is bane to men,
Flame-coloured buds of mullein manifold,
And vermeil toadstools, of which Fairies ken.

On hillock top there was an oak of old,
The lightning touched it, and its days have been.
Fingers of ivy wind, in tightening hold,
Their tendril coils, and garment it with green,
To sapless death a new luxuriance lend,
They mantle rottenness with living mien.
From this round knap the roadway doth descend,
With sudden dip, and sinketh in a slough,
Snipe thither oft, in chilly winter, wend;
Now summer midges swarm in bottom low,
By quag and mire and ink-black ooze unclean,
Where tasselled reeds and the spiked bulrush grow,
The silver cotton-grass, the wild bog-bean,
The sworded water flag, and crownéd head
Of gracious king-fern, in moist swamp, are seen.
The tufted sedges give precarious tread;
But the wise beasts, of that ill moss aware,
Will trust not to the soft and spongy bed.
By devious round, in safer course, they fare,
Nor tempt the marish, that endures no weight.
Soon the ground hardeneth. It doth upward bear.
The pathway turneth, and, by narrowing strait,
The knights have entered on a wood-ringed close,
In the hill's hollow, not of compass great.
There, in a garden, a fair cottage shows,
Half hid, half visible, through veiling leaves;

A climbing woodbine and a budding rose
Mount upward to the low and pendent eaves;
A slender jasmine, with inlacing sprays,
To latticed porch in web of greenery cleaves.
Well grafted pippins, on espalier stays,
Of rich ingathering promise good content;
Pansies and lilies edge the bordered ways
Of tended pleasance, sweetly redolent;
Behind are potherbs, which the gardener's eye
Well loveth, and will yield just increment.
A laughing brooklet maketh lullaby.
On yellow gravel it is pure and clean;
Fair stars of blue forget-me-not gleam shy,
And grey-leaved alders to the waters lean;
Within the crisp, brown, watercress is found;
And darting minnows, under bank of green.
The lord allodial of the spade-delved ground[2]
Stood waiting, watchful, at his wicket gate;
His ear had caught an unaccustoned sound
Of barded horses, bearing armoured freight;
His eye looked upon long unwonted gleam
Of shield and helm and hauberk mail of plate.
He museth, as a man in visioned dream.
He gazeth, and his glance grows proud and high.
The staff he holdeth in his hand doth seem
A steel-tipped lance, and pointeth at the sky.
In sluggish veins the dull blood quickeneth fast.
Eftsoones he checketh him, with inward sigh.
The sombre cross doth its dark shadow cast,
And sober thought befitteth reverend age.
Earthly things alter. The divine things last.
"Turned now for me that honourable page
Of knightly daring and heroic deed,
In other arms who serve for other wage,
Not the world's greatness, but celestial meed.
Then what have I with spur on booted heel,
Lance, sword, or swiftness of strong battle-steed,
With shirt of hair for coat of hammered steel
Indued, and panoplied in heavenly gear,

On forehead signed with Christ my Master's seal?
'Gainst spirit hordes, and levies alway near,
In fast and painful discipline and prayer,
I strive, this rosary my brand and spear,
Through Christ his aid, by whom I hope to share
In blissful rest of happy Paradise,
Where our dear Lord hath many mansions fair,
Which to his following he did erst devise,
Who tread the difficult and narrow way,
And climb, by true faith, to recovered skies."
Thus he saith, pondering, that old man grey,
And signeth, tremulous, the blesséd sign,
That the Foul Fiend, in all his pride, doth stay.
All ill things blench before the cross divine
Of him, who died, whose cloven heart on tree
Dissolved itself in sacrament of wine.

CANTO III

THE clock had verged upon the stroke of three,
The sun stooped downward from meridian height,
As crossed the knights the flower-enamelled lea.
Hyperion's arrows did on cuirass smite
And casque and buckler of quaint blazonry;
They turned the lance-head into torch of light.
The gentle hermit hath lift hand on high
To bless the riders, where they draw the rein.
He greeteth them with old-world courtesy:
"Sirs, of your coming is my soul right fain;
Then, benedicite, fair sons, abide,
If homely roof, and sup and diet plain,
Content you, which to furnish nought hath died.
But here be baken cakes of barley brown,
And cheese of goats'-milk, and fair curds beside.
Within this plot are healthful sallets grown;
For wild wood-sorrel I the woods explore;
God's hand with water-cress the brook hath sown,
Whose waters babble, where they pass my door;
His tithe of honey, from arboreal cave,
From the bee took I, which from comb runs o'er.
No juicy ferment of pressed grapes I have,
But lymph of fountain, cool at hottest noon;
Such fare as Adam might in Eden crave,
Ere Eve, our mother, did her ear attune
To the false Serpent, and her mate beguiled
With lure of wisdom, that soul-purchased boon.

They did repent them, driven forth on wild,
Their disobedience they repented sore:
Cancel that error, gentle Mary's child!
Have mercy, Jesu! the lost past restore,
That we may look on thine Anointed face,
And tread the pavement of the starry floor.
Oh, thou, who felt'st such pity for our case,
As to descend from thine ethereal throne,
To pay the ransom of our ruined race,
With thine own blood, and buy us for thine own;
We be thy garden, and fair field of wheat,
Though tares among us be too freely sown.
Smooth-tongued Pelagius, subtle, silver-sweet,
Misled our parents. Pardon thou their sin.
But now the heathen sit in holy seat.
Thy fold is broken, foes without, within.
Lord, let not Satan against thee prevail,
Nor the sheep perish thou didst die to win.
Oh! smite us not with thy consuming flail,
Albeit so dull thine ordinance to heed,
In earthly weapon, and in smithied mail,
Who boast us, and our hands do violent deed.
Forgive thy creatures, fashioned out of clay.
Yea! Father, hearken, for thy servants plead.
For thine elect's sake, hear the prayer I pray.
A little leaven, let it leaven all.
Bulwark our Britain in her failing day,
Though the sun darken, and the strong towers fall.
Upon the Gentile let thy curse be laid:
Encompass us with adamantine wall."

Thus he, whose thought in other groove had strayed
From his two guests, for with his soul was he,
Of coming mischief he foresaw afraid,
The storm that gathered o'er the wine-dark sea,
The churning galleys, and the were-wolf brood
Of Woden, ranging in Christ's realm once free.
But sir Palomides his absent mood
To the then business called again: "At gate

Of the far distant, questionable good,
To meet, and study to prevent our fate.
I meddle not with such things. By and by,
Time will amend the breaches of this State,
Or mar it wholly. Commonwealths must die,
As the poor units, that compose their mass.
To do the duty, which in life is nigh,
Enough is. Speedily we too shall pass.
Earl-born and churl-born have a common end,
But one is writ on monumental brass,
Another soon doth with oblivion blend.
To live in chronicle, when laid in stone,
I trust, if Fortune be so far my friend.
All this is idle. Let the cause be shown,
Which set us hither. On this noon of day,
In the wild forest as I rode alone,
At a fair well, beneath a thorn of may,
By hap I lighted on this wounded knight,
That had been hurten of a knight in fray.
I did compassionate his sorry plight:
Of royal birth, he hath been gently bred,
Whom, if with charity thy soul be white,
Have I to comfort of thy roof-tree led.
His bruiséd limbs he hath great need to lay
Upon the soft down of a restful bed;
And simples, culled beneath the perfect ray
Of Dian, needs he, when, at fullest rise,
She rideth, as a queen, in starry way."

"Beshrew the weakness of my failing eyes,"
The solitary saith, "mine eyes wax old,
Once as the falcon's, when aloft she flies,
And from afar her quarry doth behold.
Now Time hath taken from me half my sight,
And all my vigour made a tale once told.
I wist not, friend, this was a wounded knight.
Gentle or simple, 'tis all one to me.
But here, within, is a guest-chamber dight.
The bed of down and all things ready be.

Son, have him in, and we will lay him there.
No harm, save death, but it hath remedy.
I have medicaments of virtue rare,
Who go a simpling, when, on forest side,
Broods stilly night, and hangs, aloft in air,
The round orb of the moon, at fullest tide.
Christ's servitor is servant of all need,
And counteth leechcraft to his gown allied."

Down lighteth sir Palomides from steed,
And eke hath holpen his companion knight;
The way-worn chargers, from their trappings freed,
Turned loose in meadow, whinny with delight;
They roll, then start up, and proud neck bend low
To crop sweet grasses with a dainty bite.
The riders enter, where their guide doth show
A garnished chamber, and a bed, arrayed
With lawny sheets, as white as new-fallen snow,
And cunning needlework, on quilt portrayed,
With noble legend of the chaste Suzanne,
And that wise judgment the child Daniel made,
When first in Babylon his fame began.
The damosel is doomed, and borne to die,
She grieveth for her life's curtailéd span,
To perish thus, in such foul obloquy,
When comely Daniel, with arresting hand,
Hath stayed the mob, and will her cause retry.
Her innocence is proved. Condemned they stand,
Those perjured seniors, and her place they take,
To pay the forfeit, which themselves had planned
For other, and endure her fiery stake.
In artful broidery was the story told,
So movingly, the figures almost spake.

The peaceful hermit and the warrior bold
Have disencumbered of his arms of pride
That hurten youth, and laid in seemly fold
His vestments, searched his wounds, and salves applied;
Then linen bandage over all they spread.
Ir couch they settled him. Content he sighed.

Lightly that old man o'er the fevered head
Waved hands: "Fair son, for thou hast need of rest,
Around thee be soft dews of slumber shed,
Whom Holy Church accepteth as her guest.
By grace of God thou shalt be whole again,
To ride abroad upon adventurous quest,
The Golden Dragon, for thy part, maintain
Against the White Horse, and the Sessoyne host,
And bear thee well upon pavilioned plain,
Till all the knighthood of the realm be lost,
When glorious Arthur pass to death-long sleep,
Within the border of Avilion's coast,
That day, when reapers with sharp swords shall reap,
And lean-ribbed Death hold kingly festival,
Then wailing women shall in Camelot weep.
Soon after, queenly Camelot shall fall,[1]
Her princely burghers perish in a day,
Her high-born maidens serve in shameful thrall."

Thus did, prophetical, that ancient say,
A seer, and conscious of impending things,
In lap of after years obscure which lay.
But heavenly slumber, with descending wings,
Envelopeth the flower of Clyde, who lies
Oblivious of ill Fortune's hidden stings.
With leaden signet it hath sealed his eyes.
He smileth, as a child in happy sleep,
Ere manhood maketh him through sorrow wise.
That old man blesseth him: "Good angels keep
Their watch about thee! Sweet Christ shield thee well!
The juice of poppies thy lulled senses steep!
Peace in thy chamber, peace within thee dwell!
No Fiend molest thee, by his Name of power,
Whose bruiséd heel did to-bruised serpent quell!"

So fare they forth, "At hand is vesper hour,"
To the far-wanderer his host hath said,
"When I withdraw me to my secret bower,
With him to commune, in whose steps I tread.

Son, if thou worship, turn aside with me,
Else watch without, until this hour be sped.
Some cleave to God, in the great world who be,
And some are dedicate in convent hive.
One serveth with his goods ungrudgingly,
And of his labour doth another give,
To whom his labour shall be counted prayer.
Yet less did Martha than her sister thrive.
But most the contemplative life is fair,
To sit, with folded hands, at Jesus' feet,
In the world's turmoil to renounce all share,
Spurn earth's vain bubbles, loathe her pleasant meat,
Endure great hardness, and forego delights,
To know with Mary, that his bond is sweet."

Quoth sir Palomides: "But errant knights
Endure like hardness, and as often fast.
They let their blood in discipline of fights.
In toil and hardihood their days are passed.
The stars, their torches, light to chilly bed,
Their canopy, this empyrean vast.
Hath shaven monk, if very truth be said,
Such pain or travaileth in soul, as we,
Who, waking, know not where to lay the head,
Nor guess at breakfast where our supper be?
The road of knighthood is a rugged way,
If patient merit of Heaven's door be key."

"Sir knight," that eremite doth answering say,
"Men are there, who but live for selfish ease,
That eat, drink, sleep, unto their soul's decay.
Ignoble natures, spurned of Heaven are these.
From dewy dawn to shut of darkening eve,
Some labouring toil, and compass lands and seas,
And starve their appetite, the more to leave,
Who gather for their children farms and gold.
Such men their guerdon, while they live, receive.
Moth eateth, and with rust their wealth grows old.
These, born in nakedness, as naked die.

Their treasure passeth, when their knell is knolled.
Another seeketh to philosophy,
And cherisheth his wisdom as his gain;
Another hath great skill in minstrelsy,
And liveth from his dust in deathless strain;
The soldier's laurel doth a third desire,
And travaileth for this in life-long pain.
Such souls are instinct with celestial fire,
But marred and mingled with much earthly dross,
These by their merit unto heaven aspire,
Yet shirk the burden of the needful cross,
Nor learn the teachings of humility,
Their very worthiness their root of loss.
Not many wise, nor men of high degree,
God chooseth, but the base and poor and weak,
Then merchants of a loftier guild are we,
Who barter all for this one pearl we seek,
Fame, riches, pleasure, count as dung to this,
And follow, where Christ led, in sufferance meek;
In the fair region, where our Saviour is,
His citizens in supra-mundane state,
Sharers in high copartnership of bliss.
But, friend, thy pardon. Ere mine hour grow late,
Mine office calls me. Wilt without here stay,
Or enter in, and knock at heavenly gate?"

"With christened man how should a paynim pray?"
This saith. "For I was born in alien creed,
Nor yet with water wash my sins away.
I bring unto thy Master lance and steed,
In press of battle am his champion true,
But not as yet accept evangel rede,
Nor change an old faith for allegiance new;
But stand at balance, poised at equal mean,
On Beli's altar now some incense strew,[2]
Now hold the godhead of the Nazarene:
Thus, as a pendulum, my thoughts incline,
Backward and forward; but the glorious Queen
My spirit honoureth, who did enshrine

In her pure womb, that temple of delight,
And suckle at her paps the babe divine."

With stern rebuke unto the wavering knight
The grey-beard: "Betwixt two dost halting stand?
Is Christ the God, or Baalin the bright?
If Christ be God, him worship out of hand,
If Baalin, to him all homage pay.
Divide not. Jealous of his high command,
God hath no partner, nor will share his sway.
Can fire and water in one place agree,
Or Night inhabit in the house of Day?
Triune, not threefold, One in Persons Three,
Lord of the Heavens, and the void space between,
The spacious earth, the circumambient sea,
Uncomprehended, measureless, unseen,
Till Christ stooped downward from supernal height,
And veiled his glory with a clay-wrought screen.
In the Great Judgment, when he comes in might,
And all be gathered, and the books lie ope,
How wilt thou face him, stranger in his sight?
How can created with Creator cope?
Thou walkest darkling, but the light is near.
Put not in arm of Baalin thy hope.
He too shall perish, and, a phantom mere,
Descend into the reek of sulphurous hell,
With all his following, both prince and peer,
Spearman and mighty man, all such as dwell
Careless, in ceiléd palaces, at ease,
That eat the fat, and love the banquet well,
The plenished wine-cask drain unto the lees,
That hearken to the tabor's merry sound
And dulcet pipe, whom the lewd dance doth please.
Wilt thou companion of such troop be found,
To share with these their heritage of shame,
In murky darkness of exterior bound,
Where their worm dies not and unquenched their flame?
Oh! what availeth it on upper earth
To live in story with a gilded name,

Found in Heaven's balances too scant of worth,
Tossed comfortless upon no tranquil bed,
To curse thy morning of untoward birth?
If blood of Baalin for thee were shed,
And he were lifted upon cross to save,
If thorny crown did mar his ray-beamed head,
He burst the cerements of the guarded grave,
Then take him as thy God, thy worship give,
If Baalin his life thy purchase gave.
Christ, the strong wrestler, for our souls did strive,
And won us access to once forfeit skies.
He died, and only by his death we live.
He rose, a promise that we too shall rise.
The boundless ransom of our guilt he paid.
Have faith, and follow, where his footprint lies."

He thus: his auditor, no whit dismayed,
Saith: "Father, I have done him service true,
In van of battle, both with spear and blade,
Who, man to man, before the squadrons slew
The foremost captain of the sea-borne band,
When trumpets blared, and the strong White Horse flew.
I keep the marches of his pleasant land.
The spawn of Hengist range less far and free,
Because I curb them with restraining hand.
Then doubt I not he will accept my plea,
When, face to face, on the dread Judgment Day,
I stand, and gentle will his verdict be,
For gentleness doth gentle debt repay.
Yet hear my vow. When battles seven be done,[3]
I quit the falsehood of mine olden way.
Seven courses first, with spear and sword, I run,
Then cast mine old gods to the bat and mole,
And the true God and his Anointed Son
Thereafter worship, with pure heart and whole;
This service served, I, garmented in white,
At laver wash the plague-spot from my soul."

He, clad in russet: "Guide thy thought aright,
For God is greater than an earthly lord,
Nor needeth succour of mere human might.
Thy strength, the manhood of thy lance and sword,
He gave, who giveth, of his bounty free,
All good things, out of his abundance stored.
Yea! gave himself to die on rood for thee.
Learn, after his similitude, to die,
At holy font, and with him buried be;
Thence rise, to live with him the life on high,
If here on earth in penitence and pain,
To share the gladness of his by and by,
Clothed in white raiment, while thy brows sustain
Unfading coronal of purest gold,
Thy hand the palm branch of the victor train.
But, gentle knight, thy vow was overbold.
In pride and arrogance thy vow was made.
God as thy debtor do not think to hold;
Nor by desert esteem his pardon weighed:
For man's redemption is no meed of hire,
No wage of service, and no gain of trade.
Unchristened merit doth not God desire.
Ay, even good deed, that is void of grace,
Itself is sin, and shall be tried by fire.
Think how to mend this hazard of thy case.
Consent as naked in his sight to stand,
And He will clothe. His offered alms embrace,
He will enrich, and with no niggard hand,
For thou art poor and bankrupt in thy need,
Ploughing with idle plough the barren sand.
Thy confidence is vain in rushing steed.
In sword and spear-point vain thy trust, I trow.
Yet keep thy promise with observant heed.
For greater were the guilt of broken vow.
Because thou lovedst, as thy soul had light,
Thy plea the Grand Inquisitor allow!
Our Dame of Mercies guard her erring knight,
Thine advocate, whom very Christ will hear,
Thy shield, the buckler of thy sevenfold fight!

To Holy Church when thou with foot draw near,
Before God's altar lay thy load of pride,
That sin, by which, from his exalted sphere,
Fell Lucifer and all his host allied.
By pride the mighty Lucifer fell low.
But lowly meekness doth in Christ abide."

They parted. Unto prayer doth this one go;
But he, that other, where the clustering trees
Spread fragrant coolness, and the murmurous flow
Of falling waters doth his idlesse please:
Phœbus, aslant, with scarce diminished heat,
On champaign beateth and unshaded leas,
But spares to penetrate the veiled retreat
Of woven shadows, where the knight doth stray,
And crush sweet odours, with his bruising feet,
From trodden blossoms, as he takes his way,
On dædal carpet of a myriad flowers,
And giveth ear unto the roundelay,
That merle and mavis, from their viewless bowers,
With flute-like warblings chaunt by dale and dell,
When as the darling of the May-tide hours,
The prima donna, which doth all excel,
The brown inhabitant in bush apart,
Her voice uplifteth, matchless Philomel,
Beginneth, faltereth, showeth half her art,
To break off in the midmost of her song,
And lock her music in her silent heart,
Till sundown quiet all her sister throng;
Then will she pour forth, in soul melting strain,
The burden of her anguish, all night long,
So sweet a sorrow, that it mastereth pain,
Turned in Love's crucible to mere delight,
That whoso listeneth in his mind is fain,
Who waking heareth her in watch of night;
But hush, ere Phosphorus in heaven grow pale,
Utterance too sacred for the world of sight.

When first she lilteth in the leafy vale,
The far-born wanderer doth inly say:
"In name of God, it is the nightingale,
Once a fair woman, that, in bygone day,
In realm of Grecia, suffered forceful rape,
Old wrong with new she studied to repay.
Therefore the gods into this feathered shape
Transformed her, yet in wrath had mercy too;
Her lustful tyrant, in their mocking jape,
They changed to likeness of the crowned hoopoe.
She doth reiterate her passion past,
In such self-pity, that who hears must rue.
Lamenting spirit, while the world doth last,
Thy plaint shall echo through returning spring;
From their Olympus those old gods are cast.
Not all thy penitence can pardon bring.
Unto deaf ears, that cannot heed, nor hear,
Thou plainest idly, thou dost sorrowing sing."

He ceased. For suddenly, from greenwood near,
Cometh in sight an arméd company,
A gallant fellowship, with sword and spear.
Out of the bosom of that emerald sea,
A knight of aspect trim and debonnair
Paceth on mettled roan the flowered lea.
He doth, upon his shield, a lion bear,
Argent on vert, with diaper inlaid;
Upon his helm is set a panache fair;[4]
In silken housings is his steed arrayed;
With belt and baldric he full well beseen,
And pearls adorn the scabbard of his blade;
Of middle stature, confident, serene,
Broad-shouldered, as a man of proven might,
Yet half a courtier in his garb and mien.
Ten men-at-arms accompany this knight,
In leathern jack, and bonnet lined with steel,
With targe of bull's hide, plated for the fight,
And sloping lance, and spur on buskined heel,
Each weareth falchion, buckled upon thigh,

Bold hearts, responsive to the slogan peal.
One groom, the rereward of that company,
A sumpter mule controlleth by led rein,
Upon whose flanks, in equipoise, there lie
A sheaf of spears, and wine and viands, ta'en
To mend the poorer commons of that way
Of woodland, wherein their rough road hath lain.

Upon the timbered margin, which o'erlay
Dim shadows, melting into sunlit lawn,
The captain with a sign his troop doth stay:
"Comrades, draw bridle, for, from early dawn,
Far have we ridden, and have far to ride;
In some new covert, that is yet undrawn,
Our fair hart lurketh, he doth close abide;
We, to no purpose, time and toil expend,
Questing, ill sleuth-hounds, in a quest too wide."

"Fair lord," one answereth, "all things have their end.
By hap a man shall, where he look not, find.
Our noble quarry may be near unkenned.
In this wild tangle seeing eyes are blind.
The steeds plod wearily. Then welcome rest.
Far have we ridden, and in waste unkind."

The knight in ambush, with a musing breast,
Behind the curtain of the thicket hoar,
Observeth heedfully those arms, expressed
In tinct and metal of heraldic lore,
The lion, on whose brow the circlet lies;
Rampant, regardant, argent, crownéd or.
"Ector de Maris rideth in such guise,"
He saith, "of Launcelot the sister's son;
Often in tilt and tournament mine eyes,
And eke in battle, where he fame hath won,
Have looked upon him, loyal knight and true.
Is Ector dead, and is his glory done?
His goodly shell and outer rind I view.
Yon hath his cognisance, but yet, pardie!
I note him other. Hath he spoiled who slew?

Or strangers, have they twinned in heraldry?
What, if the web of Lachesis be spun,
Who shall oppose him to the Sisters Three,
By valour countervail, or prudence shun,
The closing shears of Atropos? For lo!
The steed is foundered, ere the race be run,
The pitcher broken at the fountain's flow,
The bulk of Ajax and his sevenfold targe
Repel not a predestinated blow.
Each soul shall shiver on the reedy marge
Of Acheron, where throng the gibbering dead,
To swell the fraughtage of the dismal barge,
To sup, where Pluto hath his table spread,
In realm of shadows, amid cypress gloom.
Doth stainless Ector sleep in such a bed?
Alas! I know not, if the grave entomb
His worth, and, lifted from the curving bier,
He be let down into the narrow room,
Who wash his ashes with imagined tear,
And ignorant, whether he live or no,
Take counsel, womanlike, of haunting fear."

The road of darkness he shall fare to go,
But not as yet, to foredetermined end.
God's purposes are fixed. He moves not fro'.
Man cannot mar his destinies, nor mend.
King Arthur and his Cymrian chivalry
Into the cloudland of Avilion wend
From that great battle by the Cornish sea;
Next must the spur of Launcelot grow cold;
Christ him assoil, of his sweet charity!
Ere Ector's bones shall whiten on the mould,
In Camelot, the doubly moated town,
When Sessoyne billmen storm the guarded hold,
And perish all that splendour and renown,
And women beat the tabor of the breast,
In fire when gilded palaces sink down.
Soon shall the bittern and the lone owl nest
In bower of ladies and in tapestried hall.

Woe, woe and trouble! Sorrow and unrest!
For the day passeth, and the night doth fall.
The mystic vision of the Holy Grail[5]
Ascendeth heavenward, seen no more at all,
Infrequent visitant in combe and dale,
To pass with pure-souled Galahad away;
Then death and ruin and great weight of bale,
A broken empire, a concluded sway!
That old world withereth, but the world anew
Will put forth blossoms of a later day.

CANTO IV

A PATHWAY windeth, like a serpent, through
The forest, hidden from the prying skies;
Snow-white convolvulus, and cornflower blue,
And elder blossom, skirt its fall and rise;
Fern-frond, and burdock of broad leaf, are seen,
Burdock with ear of behemoth which vies,
The bugloss, and the powdered gold on green
Of broom-plant, and the lowly pimpernel,
The whortleberry sprig of glossy sheen,
The prickly gorse, the purple heather bell,
The scarlet poppy's orient-turbaned head,
Wild mint, and thyme with aromatic smell.
The cavalier in orange arms hath led
The grieving damosel, his spear-won prey,
From the fair well, by which her lover bled,
And hawthorn, fragrant with the breath of May,
And blue-bells, that have putten on the guise
Of unstained heaven, in wilderness astray.
Tears gush forth from the fountains of her eyes.
She doth not look upon the sun divine,
Nor on the mellow gloaming of the plies
Of honeysuckle with sweet eglantine
And clematis, where 'neath, on mossy floor,
May well the queen of Oberon recline,
When blushing Cynthia peer the hill-top o'er,
And Oberon and all his elfin court
Hold revel, but the pea-green-kirtled corps

Of Pixies, while the summer night is short,
Link hands, and foot it in enchanted ring,
And Puck and Robin Goodfellow make sport.
Dull melancholy so, with brooding wing,
That gentle lady foldeth all around,
Her eyes are holden from each gladsome thing.
The pair in bosky labyrinth have wound.
They wander, in entanglement of way,
Till come, by hap, unto the plot of ground,
Whereto that anchorite, in old age grey,
Betook him from the busy haunt of men,
To tell his beads, his oraisons to say,
To dwell apart in solitary glen,
For meditation from the world withdrawn,
To waken out of sleep, when the shy wren,
Or bolder redbreast, welcometh the dawn,
Friend unto God, therefore the friend of all
God's harmless creatures of the wood and lawn.

Where opposite they view the verdant wall,
Posted as sentinel, before the glade,
One giant oak its leafy coronal
Advanceth. Underneath are men in shade,
And tethered steeds. Arms glint, and helmets gleam.
The knight in orange draweth rein afraid.
As a proud stag, with antler broad of beam,
Which starteth, if in unfrequented place
He look on one, that enemy doth seem,
Alert, upstanding on a tump, at gaze,
Nor knoweth, whether to remain or flee,
He stood thus, at the parting of the ways.

That other, set in shadow of the tree,
Whose shield the beast Atlantean displayed,
Had leapt on horseback, armed all cap-a-pie,
Disdainful of the stirrup's offered aid,
Hath urged his charger, and the newcome knight
Now challengeth to proof of spear and blade:
"Men ride in forest by the rule of might,

And dare their fortunes in their hand to take,
Where the strong arm is arbiter of right.
Thou who dost lead, amid the brier and brake,
Fair light-o-love, or ring-betrothéd bride,
Wilt splinter spear, for love and honour's sake,
And stern arbitrament of arms abide,
To wear the willow, or the kerchief hold?
They ride at hazard, that in outland ride."

Sir," he made answer, "by my torque of gold,
And ornament of gentilhood, I know,
How lawless might is lord of wood and wold,
Where every comer is apparent foe.
Laws are for cities, but in uncouth place
The strong must gather, and the weak forego.
In manful harness I my limbs encase.
I too, sir, I, wear iron at my side.
I dare to look on each opponent face,
Nor blench at peril, whatsoe'er betide.
If force one proffer, with an answering force
I foil and argument of steel his pride.
Falchion to falchion, horse against thy horse,
My paramour as battle pawn I lay.
But spear is wanting. I can ride no course,
Save, of thy complaisance, thou lance purvey.
Foul shame to meet upon so fair a mead,
Two knights, nor either other's point assay."

Quoth he, the challenger: "Christ be my speed!
Well balanced lances are at hand, good store,
Proved work of smith-craft to fulfil thy need.
Ill he doth boast, who setteth shield afore.
He boasteth best, who doth unarm, at eve,
When all is ended, and the toil is o'er."

Sir Helior vaunted: "Thou shalt have good leave,
Sir, if thou vanquish me, pardie, to boast.
Yet think I rather, that the event will grieve.
For many wander on the Stygian coast,

That answer, if one ask, who sent them there :
He did divorce my body from my ghost,
The Logrian knight, which useth arms to wear
Of orange tinct. By him, in manhood's prime,
I left behind my babes and lady fair.
By him I passed into the sunless clime,
Who died not, verily, by weakling hand,
But his, the wonder of his tribe and time."

"God's urn," his rival made reply, "doth stand.
Who knoweth, how the lot that urn leap fro'?
The Jewish stripling quelled the spear and brand
With simple sling, and did huge bulk o'erthrow.
Heaven is above all, and high-ruling Fate.
A woman's hand Abimelech laid low.
Great Thetis' son, before the Scaean gate,
Fell smitten by the shaft of coward knight.
Hell's portal gaped, by base Ægisthus' hate,
For Agamemnon. After ended fight,
Foul Myrmidons, upon the Troyan plain,
Pierced Hector through. Oh! pitiful despite,
With his own life-blood Hector to distain,
Unhelmeted, unshielded, at ill hour,
Mirror of knighthood, lamentably slain.
He was indeed of Ilion the flower,
Of Priam's empery the prop and stay,
That upheld more than Pergamus his power."
Such thoughts he pondereth, such a word doth say,
Scorning to brag, as idle chanticleer,
Whose lusty crowing preludeth his fray;
Then turned he to his varlet standing near:
"Sirrah, fetch lances of a trusty tree,
On stithy forged of sooty Mulcibêr,
To gladden knight's heart, when he ride on lea.
Speed, and return thou, nor thy labour spare."
The knave hath sped and tarried not, pardie!
His laden shoulder doth the war-sheaf bear.
"Choose," said the challenger. The challenged knight
Maketh choice, husbandlike, with heedful care.

They wheel their chargers. They prepare their might,
Then rush together, as the winds of God.
So stern a dint on middest shield they smite,
The tough ash snappeth, as weak hazel rod.
Both steeds, both riders, overborne go down,
And the wood echoeth, and the tree-tops nod.

She, that of combat is the cause, the crown,
Sitteth her palfrey, sorrowful of cheer,
Sendal of loom of Taprobane her gown,[1]
Broidered with pearls and beaded stomacher,
Brocade her petticoat of gold and green,
Grey hat is looped above her shell-like ear.
She dieteth her soul on bread of teen,
Whose weeping eyes, in the sweet hawthorn dale,
Her dear lord dead, as she supposed, had seen.
Upon the damask of her cheek the pale,
Wan, lily supersedeth all the rose;
So doth the white above the red prevail.
A Niobé, that imaged queen of woes,
She waiteth, motionless, in mute despair.
Such grief is locked beneath her breast of snows.

The knights are up. From scabbard cave they bare
The steely lightning of the bickering blade.
As two wild boars that grim of visage are,
Which meet in onset, in the woodland glade,
With gash of tusk, and thrust of stubborn side,
Till one be beaten, and the lists evade.
Long as the voiding sands in hour-glass glide,
Above diminish, and increase below,
When men the daughters of the day divide,
Till all run out, and full the round heap grow,
Their doughty blows they twain courageous deal,
As master-craftsmen of an art they know,
With feint, with awk stroke, and with whir of steel,[2]
The dint of helmet, and the rent of mail.
He giveth ground, the Logrian lord doth reel;
His might, the manhood of his bosom, fail.

He cannot pierce within that iron wall,
Nor stand upright against that rain of hail.
He falleth to the ground with crashing fall.
The sword is lifted, as in act to smite.
The fear of death his spirit doth appal.

"Have mercy, sir, an overcomen knight,"
He crieth out, with lamentable cry,
"I yield me, mastered by thy matchless might,
And own me caitiff. Recreant knight am I.
Still suffer me to look upon the sun.
Send me not down in the dark grave to lie,
Shadow with shadows, and embark upon
The skiff of Charon, listen to the bay
Of the three-throated dog of Acheron.
A pleasant thing 'tis to behold the day.
But who can bear to dwell in endless night,
To rot amid the stench and foul decay
Of the rank charnel, buried out of sight,
Shut off from contemplation of his kind?
This thought doth fill me with a sore affright."

The victor hearkened, and his point declined.
On cross of pommel either hand he stayed.
He leaneth on his sword, moved in his mind,
Yet liketh not a prayer unknightly prayed.
"Arise," he saith, "and stand upon thy feet.
To speak the loth word is to 'scape the blade.
Yet honour is life's salt and savour sweet.
With ignominy thy grey hairs to buy,
It is a bargain for a man unmeet.
Should not the soldier as a soldier die,
So scour his scutcheon of all rust of shame,
Mortal so put on immortality,
The tomb itself his anteroom of fame?
What need of wailing coronach, or moan
Of lamentable dirge, or torch-lit flame,
For such as dying make the world their own,
Who live in story through remembered years,

Whose monument is more than marble stone,
Or lasting brass, whom no oblivion nears?
Thou churl in spirit, of thy doom afraid,
Cheap boon I grant to these thy coward tears.
Avaunt! with thee thy recollection fade!
Braggart in speech, fair rind and rotten core,
Garbed as a warrior, but with heart of maid."
Sadly the knight from pavement of green floor,
Got up, took horse, and sadly rode away.
He passeth out of sight in woodland hoar.

At the first token of concluded fray,
Rose sir Palomides, the glorious knight,
Out of the covert, where embushed he lay.
Forthwith he dressed him toward that lady bright,
And took her by the hand, and soothly spake:
"Oh! cynosure of lovely dames, delight
Of Galahalt's land, beside the salt-sea lake,[3]
Full well, in tilt or tournament, for thee
A spear adventurous may champion break,
Or wear thy favour, when, on tented lea,
His gilded ensign the Pendragon rear,
When shrieking with loud neigh, the White Horse flee.
Speak, damosel, if that thy conscious ear
Its port have opened, and be lodged inside
The chamber of thy heart, his name, that peer,
Who rideth foremost of the spears of Clyde,
Epinogris, conceived in royal bed
Of stately Clariance by the princess bride?
Time hath not ripened to the full that head,
But earth the harvest of his deeds shall reap,
And he the lofty path of honour tread,
When spring be summer, if but God him keep
To bear the sceptre, that his sire hath borne,
When laid in cairn the grey-haired warrior sleep."

The damosel made answer: "Sir, forlorn,
With weary foot, in the world's wilderness,
I wander. Nathless, on my heart is worn,

As amulet, amid the storm and stress
Of the rough equinox of life, that name,
Of which, whether by knowledge, or by guess,
Thou madest mention. 'Tis a lure to tame
The bird I bear beneath my milk-white breast,
Caged in the prison cell of this poor frame.
Thy token is assayed. It passeth test.
I will believe, that thou'rt indeed my friend,
Whose lips have, sweetly syllabling, expressed
The word, which angels, when they condescend
To dialect of earthly speech, suspire.
Such heavenly music with its sound doth blend.
Oh, mettled steed, that did too quickly tire!
Oh, blossom, prematurely nipped by frost!
Illustrious son of an illustrious sire!
Thou flittest now, a disembodied ghost,
'Mid fields of amaranth and asphodel,
Where bloom the lilies on Elysian coast,
In blesséd isle, where souls of heroes dwell,
Far, very far, in Occidental main,
Lapped by the dying waves, in cadent swell,
Which neither winter frost, nor chill of rain,
Vexeth, nor heat of the too garish day.
Their constant seasons neither wax, nor wane.
Soft is their twilight, and eterne their May.
Past flowery coppices and leasowes green,
The winding brooklets murmur on their way.
Heard is the voice of Philomel, at e'en;
Gaily the missel-thrush and mavis sing,
Plaintive the ring-dove cooeth in the dene;
But poiséd lark, aloft on airy wing,
Floodeth heaven's field with wondrous symphony.
Their swallow, guest of an unfading spring,
Buildeth in eaves meant for eternity.
They do not measure by terrestrial year,[4]
But march and movement of the tardier sky,
Till rear be van, and van again be rear,
When gathered all the flock to pristine fold,
Sun, moon, and every star, and planet sphere,

Refill its station occupied of old,
And earth, in eld, her infancy renew,
Gilding our iron age with second gold.

"Commingled yet with herb of bitter rue
The cup I drink and remnant of my days.
Cold are the lips, that did so sweetly woo.
My lord is parted from my longing gaze.
He walketh not amid the world of men,
Nor seen he standeth in familiar ways.
Oh, passed away from hearing and from ken,
Where I may listen to, nor see thee more,
Where blue-bells grow, and grass is green in glen,
Gashed with the steel, and weltering in thy gore,
By the dun waters of the wayside well,
An empty casket thrown, with rifled store!

"I was a maid, at sound of evetide bell,
Whom daybreak, blushing through the mist, did see
No maid. With shamèd lips my fault I tell.
Epinogris, my lord, I gave to thee
My flower of womanhood and untouched crown,
The fountain of my sealed virginity;
Yes, all the fences of my pride trod down,
That thou might'st enter on my garden fair,
And hold the keys of my surrendered town.
Lo! my reproach is written in my hair.
It is not graced with kerchief matronly,
Ah no! nor may the snood of Dian wear.
Mary, dear Mother, hearken to my plea!
Of gibing courtiers let me not be jest,
Nor ladies look askance, in bower, at me.
The precious jewel, that I once possessed,
Is lost. I feed upon the husks of shame.
Now cometh penitence, too late a guest.
Yet greater loss than loss of honest name,
And greater grief than grief for joys unwed,
That amorous Death, with her cold kiss, thee claim
To be the bridegroom of her loveless bed,

The sweetest lover woman e'er might know.
Farewell! Thy requiem with that word be said."

"Grieve not, sweet lady, grieve not greatly so,"
Made answer sir Palomides, the knight.
"Love trysteth both with happiness and woe.
Its bitter waters with its sweet unite.
What boot to murmur, if with after pain
One pay the forfeit of a stolen delight,
That, in his heyday, rode with snaffle rein,
Nor bitted with the curb his lewd desire?
The spotted garment will long keep its stain,
That once was draggled, and is smirched in mire.
Yet, peradventure, from the scathe of tongue
Bold knight his mistress, as though purged through fire,
Can shield with sharp sword in a right arm strong,
That disrepute her glory come not near.
And, madam, be thy quarrel right or wrong,
If no defender of more worth appear,
On listed field I will thy champion be,
And prove thine innocence at point of spear,
For love of him, who did companion thee.
Ay, by this hand, if one untruly swear,
That crow exceed the swan's white purity,
'Tis knightly duty to protect the fair.
On the black ledger of our mortal sin,
Write not, oh seraph, what we lying dare,
Or blot it o'er, that it oblivion win:
The righteous Auditor so disallow
This item, when the Great Accompt begin.
I gloze, yet, i' faith, in the world, I trow,
We must yield something to necessity,
Nor draw the furrow with too straight a plough,
But trust, He merciful will pass it by,
If the foot err in misdirected way.
Who shall affirm he hath done nought awry?
Oh! many times, in many modes, we stray,
Were God extreme to mark inperfect deed;
But He, who moulded us of plastic clay,

He knoweth all our weakness and our need,
And will forgive, because He loveth well
His children. We but with a Father plead.

" But, lady, not on lawns of asphodel,
Where many souls of valiant heroes be,
Where thornless is the rose-bush, sweet the smell
Of the blanch lilies, on enchanted lea,
In purple twilight, and the golden haze
Of shrouded Islet, in a sunset sea,
Where nothing entereth that is vile and base,
But every toward growth and pleasant thing,
Where Yule-tide cold and heat of Dog-star days
Are tempered by the Zephyr breath of spring,
No, not as yet, a disembodied sprite,
Hath knelt, in homage to the dark-browed King,
Thy lover, in the land beyond our sight,
The shadow country we so little ken.
Believe me, no. But still, a living wight,
He dwelleth in the waking world of men,
Nor, on the phantom shallop of the dead,
Hath taken passage to the Fäery glen,
Aboard the keel, upon whose yards are spread
Sails, woven of the web of gossamer ;
No foot of seaman doth that plancheon tread,[5]
Unsteered by craft of earthly mariner,
O'er depths unsounded by the plummet line,
On path of light, heaven-guided wayfarer.

" Give ear, oh lady, to this word of mine.
When Mithras paused on his ascended stair,
Ere he stooped downward to the day's decline,
In middle wood as I did wandering fare,
By hap the knight Epinogris I found,
A wounded lion in sequestered lair,
A king of sorrows, thronéd on the ground,
Beneath the thorn, on hyacinthine bed,
Beside the well with mossy stone set round.
Seeing, I pitied him, and hither led
Unto the lodging of the man of prayer,

On whom their snows have many winters shed.
As tree, that wantoneth in summer air,
Doth off its bravery, when days grow cold,
In his life's autumn he coarse frieze doth wear
For fur of minever, or cloth of gold,
And lavisheth in alms, that good old man,
The garnered wealth his banded coffers hold,
For the remainder of his earthly span
To cast his lot in with the poor of God,
To run the race the great Apostle ran,
And tread the path the dear Redeemer trod.
Hence all his oraisons, on angel wings,
Float upward, from the base terrestrial sod,
Into the presence of the King of Kings.
Aforetime warrior he curbed bitted steed,
But now is minister of holy things.
Look, where from curtain of grey alder freed,
The waters like to molten silver gleam,
A lowbuilt cottage, roofed with thatch of reed,
Set within haye of privet and hornbeam,
Doth shyly, through the lace-work of the leaves,
Peep at us, from the corner of the stream.
Behind the pent-house of those hanging eaves,
The minion of thy soul, madam, I swear,
His harmful hurt with medicine retrieves,
And kindly sleep. Then bid adieu to care.
For now the better sun, with glorious sheen,
Doth all the mischief of the morn repair,
And bring again the joys of yestere'en.
Now overhead, the field of heaven is blue.
The paths of earth, beneath your feet, are green."

"Sweet espérance thou mak'st to bloom anew,"
She saith, "within the garden of my breast,
Uprooting the desertless weed of rue.
Oh! messenger of an evangel blest,
Glad tidings of great joy thy lips unfold,
And the white dove bring in my soul to nest.
Epinogris, my prince, that heart of gold,

And puissant spear of pleasant Valencie,[6]
Shall I, with living eyes, living behold?
Jesu be thanked! Then it is well with me!
Passed the north wind and winter of my pain.
The summer of a new felicity
Doth make amends, and duplicate my gain.
Draweth a troubled morn to clear eve-tide,
And broken are the clouds, that brought the rain.
Sir, of thy goodness, prithee be my guide.
I wend, as pilgrim, to this holy shrine,
Where he, my god, doth, as a god, abide,
Whose light the radiant Hesper doth outshine.
Under Philemon's roof great Jove doth stay,
And by his presence make poor hut divine."

"Madam, there is a lion in the way,"
The son of Astlabor full gravely said.
"I do not think, without a foughten fray,
To lead, but with the peril of my head,
Thee thither, for a champion dour and grim
Doth hold the passage, knight of mickle dread,
Of steel-hard sinew, and of iron limb.
Doubt not withal. This harvest darg is mine,
And, hand to hand, I will encounter him,
For love of Isolde with the glorious eyne,
Isolde, whose beauty doth illume the West,
Golden-haired daughter of Milesian line,
Crowned queen in Tyntagil, the vulture's nest,
Storm-rocked, on basement of the foaming sea,
That moaneth in its caverns of unrest.
For thy dear lord, Epinogris, and thee
My knightly devoir I fare forth to do.
Breathe from thy lips one oraison for me,
That good success unto mine arms accrue,
Since equal were thy portion in defeat,
My victory shall thy path with roses strew."

These words thus uttered, he moved on to meet,
Unrecognised, unknowing, him who bore

The desert-dweller of the land of heat,
The beast courageous of the Libyan shore,
Argent on vert; in middle glebe who stood,
And rested him, his toil of combat o'er,
Watching sir Helior pass into the wood,
Till hidden by the roadway curve from sight,
By the far plane tree, where the turtle cooed,
He vanished into depth of leafy night,
Along a path, whose green intricacies
To barton lead, and stead of shepherd wight,
His seely sheep who herdeth on the leas,
Skilled rustical to draw from pipéd reed
Such melodies as maids in russet please;
Simple, withouten craft, or heady greed,
Poor, with the bread of poverty content,
And forward to lend help in brother's need.
So, toward his castle by the winding Trent,
Rode wearily, beneath the mocking skies,
The knight in orange, grieving as he went.

Whose better star did in ascendant rise
Moveth with stately step, of victory fain,
To greet the damosel, that thrice-won prize,
Plaything of Fortune, ta'en, and lost, and ta'en.
He noteth, and his eyes blaze coals of fire,
A stranger stand and hold her bridle rein.
"Each goodman his own milch cow drive to byre,
Out of his own flock every shepherd feed,
Nor stray beyond the bound of just desire.
Sir knight, this lady whither wilt thou lead?
What hast thou with her? Touch not my white doe,
Nor plough with heifer taken from my mead.
When knights do battle with hard thrust and blow,
The golden apple should a third knight seize,
While yet the first be busied with his foe?
Unchivalrous! What manners, sir, are these?
Sure, villain churl with gentleman may vie,
When gentlemen descend to villainies."

But sir Palomides made proud reply:
"Fellow, since ever I was dubbed a knight,
Censorious word I pass unheedful by.
Women with tongues, but men with weapons fight.
What are thine approbation, or thy blame,
To me, sir? By the Lord of dark and light,
Set high, where slander misseth of its aim,
Account I render to myself alone,
And am myself the warden of my fame.
I follow quest. I do but seek mine own.
Unto the lure strayed falcon I recall,
Who snatch not, as a dog, at other's bone,
Nor loose man's heifer, held in rightful stall.
This gentle dame my service doth command.
Her free-born neck disdaineth to be thrall.
She was not bred a neife upon thy land.[7]
By God, sir, whether thou say ay, or no;
My warrant is the good sword in my hand;
Whither I go, this damosel shall go.
If thou be grieved, thou wearest arms as I.
Let deeds, not froth of words, thy manhood show."

"Thou dost me, sir, too much discourtesy,"
The stranger knight said, "by the blesséd rood,
Whereon the Saviour of the world did die,
Who, through the hazel and the spindle-wood,
Hast looked upon my travail in the fight,
How I be weary, how my wounds sweat blood.
Thou thinkest, but it is no thought of knight,
Great is the vantage that thou hast of me.
Thy malice God upon thy head requite!
Mete they with measure, that thou mete, to thee!
Fool, fool, who weenest, that an easy prey
Hath the jade Fortune brought unto thy knee.
But whoso purchase must expect to pay.
My valued pearl if thou desire to buy,
Her cost is greater than thy purse will weigh.
By Him, who did create the starry sky,
And fix the bound of Ocean's ambient flow,

At dearer rate thou shalt acquire, than I,
With sterner buffet, and more forceful blow.
I will abate no tittle of my right.
Art thou my lord, to whom I heriot owe?[8]
Peer an thou be to Launcelot in might,
Or sad-eyed Tristram of the Fair-horned shore,
Or, set their equal at exalted height,
Palomides, whom christened mother bore
To paynim soldan, in the sunrise land,
Whose stones are jewels, its dust golden ore,
In Providence I trust and this strong hand.
God and good conscience manly vigour lend!
Justly from scabbard I draw forth my brand.
Heaven judge betwixt us! Heaven the right defend!
The suit is brought unto the last appeal.
Peace words. This controversy swords must end."

CANTO V

THE sun in heaven had set his glowing wheel
Low down, and neighbour to the hill-top rise,
When shield met shield, and steel encountered steel.
The love-lorn damosel with anxious eyes
Beheld her champion, where he toiled in fray.
Her ungloved hand she lifted toward the skies.
"Queen of the star-world, hear me, when I pray,
By the pure fountains of thy milk, which flowed,
And the chaste bosom, where the God-babe lay;
By the poor stable, where ye twain abode,
Amid the lowing kine, in Bethlehem town;
Yea, by the brightness of the star, which glowed,
When Melchior, Caspar, and Balthazar bowne,
From the Great River, and from Babel old,
And, at thy feet, laid reverently down
Their myrrh, their frankincense, their offered gold;
By the melodious chaunt of angel choir,
That bade the shepherd leave his sheep in fold,
And seek, in market-place, the world's desire;
Mother of sorrows, cognisant of tears,
If I have trailed my chrismal robes in mire,
That thereto soil of earthliness adheres;
Oh! visit not with an unkindly frown,
Great empress of the high-revolving spheres,
Thine erring daughter's muddied coats and gown,
Though waywardly she walk in rain-drenched ways,
Who for a bauble from her put her crown.

E'en as the publican, I dare not raise
My sorrow-clouded eyes, but stand afar,
And beat upon my breast, with downcast gaze.
I do not press, where the self-righteous are,
A sinful woman, and a child unwise;
Such inward foul mine outward fair doth mar.
But penitent in part. Let it suffice,
That I be sorry for my fault, who still
Would yield, if tempted, to luxurious vice,
Weak and a woman, impotent of will.
So difficult it is the right to choose,
So smooth the broad road and descent of ill.
Oh thou, who feltest in thy heart each bruise
The cruel rods inflicted on thy Son,
When wicked Pilate and the traitor Jews
Mocked, and made nought of that Anointed One,
Wounding with iron nails those sainted feet,
And loving hands, that had such mercy done!
If love of parent and of child be sweet,
Still sweeter is the love of maid to man;
It stirreth in the pulse with wilder beat;
Since the first morning of the world began,
When youthful Adam wooed a youthful Eve,
Where the swift waters of Euphrates ran
Past leafy bowers God did in Eden weave;
Before the Serpent with beguiling tongue
Wrought the world's evil, and taught Heaven to grieve.
Saint Mary, grant my champion's arm be strong!
That he prevail, and his just sword outweigh
The might of this protagonist of wrong!
Oh, garmented in light of heavenly day,
Oh, Maid and Mother, without fleshly stain,
Oh, diademed with stars of mystic ray,
For human error if our human pain
Be part atonement, heed my suppliant cry;
To my dear lord, Epinogris, again
Restore me, lest that I despair and die!
By the true joys and griefs of motherhood,
Daughter of Eve, beloved of the Most High,

Fountain of hope, compassionate of mood,
To my petition gracious ear incline,
Who wait, expectant, at thy door, for good."
Such prayer she prayed unto the Rose Divine,
All glorious, seated on a sapphire throne,
Above the steadfast stars, and twelvefold sign
Of the great Zodiac, and each mobile zone,
Whose ear is open, even from the sky,
To breathing of our half articulate moan.

But the two knights do battle valiantly,
As raging lions, on Gaetulian strand,
In stubborn conflict which contending vie,
On treeless desert, and Sahara sand.
So combatant doth combatant oppose,
With shield each wardeth, smiteth sore with brand.
They carve through mail, until the red blood flows.
Marvel hath sir Palomides, what wight
He be, that counter with such swashing blows.
He dreadeth greatly to be shamed in fight;
Stirred with the stimulant of self disdain,
Then calleth on his hid reserves of might,
His blows he raineth, like the winter rain,
Buffet on buffet forward to bestow;
Back, inch by inch, back, foot by foot, on plain,
He pusheth, as a butting ram, his foe,
Whose sword now cleaveth to his tired hand,
Whose buckler, borne on spent arm, droopeth low,
Scarce, by his manhood, able to withstand.
But joyful sir Palomides of cheer.
Both life and death are under his command.

"Sir, prithee, stay, thou gentle cavalier,
A little stay thy wearied hand," quoth he,
"And, of thy courtesy, breathe in mine ear,
By whom begotten, of what house, thou be.
In hall of princes, or in bower of dame,
What appellation doth lip lend to thee?"

"Sir," he made answer, "I dare well my name,
And the strong rock, whence I was hewn, to show,
And the fair country, from whose bourne I came,
Upon condition, that I reap, who sow;
With whom I grapple, garbed in gear of steel,
This hour of sunset, have I leave to know?
Thus, as a chapman, with my wares I deal,
And make a barter of commodities;
But, else, the barrier of my lips I seal."

"Sir, habited in coat of noted guise,
Yet not a wether native to this fold,
If I may trust the judgment of mine eyes,"
He saith, whose laud is writ in legend old,
"I will as a just merchant deal with thee,
And match thy token with as current gold.
By my true birth, and high nobility,
Unpack thy fardel to my seeing eyne,
And I will ope my budget, verily,
And, if thou lend thy confidence, lend mine.
If to know aught be grateful to thy mind,
Speak first, then afterward thine ear incline."

Quoth he, that other: "Sir, thy gold refined
Will pay for my poor dross and overpay,
And leave me debtor. But the peel and rind
To strip off, this is pith of all I say:
Great Astlabor, that paynim soldan bold,
Begat me, near unto the Fount of Day,
Where the broad waters of the Pison rolled,[1]
Which Paradise, the Mount of God, gush fro'.
Rich is the land with bdellium and with gold,
A garden, where the fig and olive grow,
And fruitful vine, but fleecy sheep, on lea,
Wax fat, and trailing-footed heifers low.
Three goodly branches, from one parent tree,
We sprang, the midmost of that cluster I,
Who, bonding link of that fair trinity,
Did, equidistant, first with third ally.

Our sire, the satrap of the Median land,
Rooted in Achæmenian ancestry,
O'er many tribesmen ruled with iron hand,
And many a spearman followed him to fray.
Well he could wield both battle-axe and brand.
The golden Sun and pale Dictynna's ray,
The sun that setteth, and the moon that wanes,
These were his gods, which move in ordered way,
Creatures of Him, Omnipotent who reigns.
To these the Magian doth libation pour,
At thousand altars, in a thousand fanes;
And featly trip it, on the mossy floor,
'Neath each green oak, and on each pleasant hill,
Trim virgins, and with cymbal clash adore
Both Dryad Nymph, and Naiad of the rill,
Satyr, or Faun, or Demon of the grove,
Unhallowed vassals of the Lord of ill.
Our gentle mother, that unsullied dove,
Steeped not her soul in bitterness of gall,
But, by the pattern of the Saints above,
With heart obedient to the Master's call,
She from defilement kept her garments clean,
Amid the gauds of that polluted hall,
Walking in pilgrim steps, that blue-eyed queen,
Who sweet acceptance with her God hath won,
An olive branch within Christ's orchard green.
Myself and Segwaride, her last born son,
Her wisest counsels did persuasive woo;
Both we the robe of christening did on,
Changing the worser old for better new.
But wandereth, lost in an illusion vain,
Nor separateth yet the false from true,
Palomides, of whom, in labour pain,
Our groaning mother was first brought to bed;
One clogging vice his native worth doth stain;
At feast of devils he hath supped and fed;
To Baalin and moonfaced Ashtaroth
He burneth incense on each mountain head.

When boyish cheek is charged with rougher growth,
And stirs the blood with fresh virility,
Men gently born abhor ignoble sloth;
They ride on errand, many lands they see,
Cities and marts and palaces of kings,
Put down the tyrant, set the captive free;
They love the glory that adventure brings,
With fearful giants war, fierce dragon tame,
Make things impossible seem compassed things.
Sprung from such father, born of such a dame,
Palomides, our boast and ornament,
In youth, and covetous of wider fame,
From the fair valley, where his prime was spent,
Passed forth, and fro' the fountain of the Day
Attained unto the golden Occident.
But Astlabor is dead, and turned to clay,
In gloomy vault with his forefathers laid:
Go, seek my first-born, she doth weeping say,
Our mother, and we hearkened and obeyed.
Lo! these three years sir Segwaride and I
Pursue the quest, in sunshine and in shade.
Through gleaming isles, which, 'neath Aegean sky
Lie, pearls upon the bosom of the main,
We sailed, with a straight course, for Italy,
Saturnian realm of legendary reign,
Where the tall elm is husband to the vine,
And bearded corn-sheaves laugh on Lombard plain;
Thence his star followed, o'er the watery brine,
To golden limit of Hesperian land;
To the Great Ocean and the world's confine,
Where was the Garden of Enchantments planned,
Where Hercules the wakeful gryphon slew,
And culled the rich fruit with adventurous hand.
With greater labour than Alcides knew,
Whither no foot of any Greek had trod,
O'er yeast of Atlas and Biscayan blue,
We cast our anchor by that isle of God,
Where hidden the mysterious ark from sight,[2]
And the Two Tables, and the blossoming rod,

Verdant Ierné, whose lamp burneth bright,
Where noble learning is the waiting-maid
Of true religion and commanded right;
Where Agusance, in saffron robe arrayed,
Lord of the shaggy beard and flowing hair,
Doth to the parentless bring present aid,
And hearken, heedful, to the widow's prayer,
Or welcometh the stranger at his gate
With mead and meats and hospitable care.
We looked upon the glories of his state,
Where harpers harped, and wassail bowl went round;
There the good knight, Palomides, but late
Had sojourned, and his brow with myrtle crowned.
More to the warrior's heart the clarion peal;
And mighty wars were warred on British ground,
Where high Pendragon with sharp edge of steel
The might of Woden broke, on tented plain,
And wrought deliverance to the Commonweal,
And purged the land with blood of Sessoyne slain.
At Duglas, or the wood of Celidon,
They fell before him, till the day did wane.
Seven thousand threads, by the Weird Sisters spun,
Inwoven in the web of the world's loom,
Were snapped ere sundown. Mourneth for her son
Full many a mother. Hell enlarged her room,
Whither, by troops, were souls of sinners sped,
Impenitent, to dwell in rayless gloom.
Christ's martyr soldiers sleep in lily bed.
One little pang. And, after, Paradise.
Who bleed in battle for the cross of red
Sup with their Saviour. More than heart devise
They have of gladness, a celestial fee,
And mansion of eterne felicities.

"In a tall carrack, o'er the narrow sea,
Her white sails bellied by the following wind,
To the Silurian coast, and wave-washed quay
Of Milford Haven, we did passage find.
Thence rode we landward, and, by dale and down,

To stronghold, dear unto the War-god's mind,
We came, to Camelot, the royal town,
Whose girdling ramparts, and whose bastion towers,
The escarpment of the Mount of Battle crown.
Beneath are meadows, gilt with cowslip flowers,
The bloom of orchard, and the verdurous screen
Of wilding forest and fayhaunted bowers,
And lapping tides, upon whose glassy sheen
Flit yawl and pinnace, with their wings of snow,
As beautiful, as when, in painted scene,
The mingled colours of a Master glow.
But, peradventure, born of Cymrian birth,
Thine eyes the citadel of kings well know.

"Ladies among, in junketing and mirth,
Some find the fulness of their own content.
Some travel on the road of harder worth,
Nor to the right hand, nor the left hand, bent,
Of whom the good Palomides is one:
They fast in peril and an endless Lent,
If aught be left undone, count nothing done,
As the mad miser reckoneth his gain,
Whose sought for farthing doth past pound outrun.
He doth the burden of his arms sustain,
And under the pavilion of the sky
Hath lodging rough, and buyeth praise with pain.
In haunt of wood-lark he will fainer lie,[3]
Than listen to mouse cheep from wainscot side.
But now, I wot, he be not far, but nigh,
That royal hart with brow of beaméd pride.
His slot is marked upon this forest mould.
He doth amid the ling and bracken hide.
The toils are pitched. Sir knight, my tale is told.
Men name sir Safire, when they name my name,
Of the proud blood of Codomannus old."

"Ah! gentle brother, of one stream we came,"
Made answer sir Palomides, the knight;
"Ere breathed the spirit of the living flame

Within us, or our eyes beheld the light,
Both in one pit, one mother's womb, have lain,
And born were suckled on one bosom white.
But now our hands unbrotherly we stain,
Brother with brother's blood, too near akin!
And wage a combat, where can neither gain,
But he be loser, which appear to win.
Certes, that sir Palomides am I,
If to praise self be pardonable sin,
Who claim in honour with the best to vie.
'Twere seemlier other lips should me commend.
Sealed be mine own in maid-like modesty.
Alas! that stout lord Astlabor hath end,
Borne sadly forth upon the curving bier,
And laid in darkness of the world unkenned."
So spake that glorious paladin and peer
Of the Companionship of Table Round,
Such words he spake to his own brother dear.
Forthwith sir Safire cast upon the ground
Buckler and sword, and, kneeling upon knee,
Hath prayed for pardon to his lord renowned,
"Fair sir, my brother, be not wroth with me,"
He saith, "if that I sacrilegious hand
Have lifted, and have striven in arms with thee.
God knoweth it, my heart no mischief planned,
Who deemed I battled with a knight unknown,
Chance met, a stranger on an alien strand."

"Light fine for little fault doth soon atone"
He, born his elder, speaketh him again,
"Who, but a woman, careth to make moan
O'er bloodlet, or the sluicing of a vein?
Through the barred visor friend, or seeming foe,
What human eye discriminateth plain!
God doth our weakness and our blindness know.
He knoweth, how we little can discern;
Immured in dungeon of our night below,
We learn not, as immortal angels learn,
But hit or miss, at chance-directed aim,

According as the bowl by bias turn.
We be but chequers in the wily game
The great Olympians on the world's board play.
Not we, but most is Destiny to blame,
That tarred us on to this uncomely fray.
I joy, my brother, thou so bravely bear
Thy weapon. Put unquiet thought away.
For, by the falchion and the cross, I swear,
I, that account me rival to the best,
Whose foot is set upon the highest stair,
Ranked the third warrior of the warlike West,
Rejoice thy manful prowess to have seen,
Almost my peer in honourable geste."

They thus accorded them, at fall of e'en,
The princely sons of valiant Astlabor;
Each lifted with his hand the visor screen,
That hung, a dark cloud, his known visage o'er.
But sir Epinogris, who wounded lay,
In solar chamber, upon upper floor,[4]
From sleep awakened, in a sore dismay,
By clash of arms and the loud bruit of fight,
Had looked on the beginning of their fray.
The sturdy yeomen stand in open sight,
A few score paces from the wicket gate.
Each beareth buckler, each hath broadsword bright;
They seem the signal of their lord to wait.
Their force, their armature, the youth well scanned.
Quoth he: "My dear lord is in parlous state.
One such as he, mayhap, with single brand,
Will venture, by his hardihood, on twain;
Not Wade himself against a host might stand,[5]
But, overborne by numbers, find his bane.
Albeit a knight be better than a groom,
One might is, pitted against many, vain.
Nearer than I my patron to his tomb.
No goddess mother dipped him in the tide
Of inky Styx, in subterranean gloom,
His hide to toughen as Achilles' hide.

But that is fable. Son of Clariance, dare
To perish at thy benefactor's side,
Or live the triumph of thy friend to share.
Perchance we shall prevail above our foes,
And laugh, at supper, to have 'scaped from snare."
Therewith he donned his doublet and his hose,
And all his armour hastily did on,
And from his chamber of disturbed repose,
With wavering step, but resolute, hath gone.
But Peace, the dove, descending from on high,
Her olive leaf hath fetched, and war is done.
Brother with brother, they talk brotherly.
In germane arms each other they enfold.
Hand claspeth hand in new-found amity.

The heart of that sweet damosel is cold.
She saith: "Now doth new covenant obtain.
The former covenant is waxen old.
As sealed a friendship, in the bond of Cain,
The Roman count and that adulterous king,
In Jewry, when the Prince of Peace was slain,
New sorrow so doth from this concord spring.
My friend is leaguéd with mine enemy.
I stand forsaken, a surrendered thing.
I cry to God, with unavailing cry;
But God is far, or deaf he doth not heed.
I trusted to the might of chivalry;
I trusted in a frail and broken reed.
By mine example let all women know,
How wide the gulf is betwixt word and deed.
Men promise bravely. They make boastful show.
But fair performance laggeth far behind.
Some shrink back, coward-like, from stricken blow,
And some forget, and others change their mind;
Some for a mess of sorry pottage yield
Their noble birthright, in ignoble kind.

"What knight is yon, who traverseth the field?
Sweet Christ! he weareth coat of Valencie.

The colours of our Lady mark his shield.
Those azure tincts of an alternate sky
With the pure metal of Diana's ray
Show well my lord, Epinogris, is nigh.
Such bends he wont in blazon to display.
Look, gentle master, look upon thine own.
Thy passing step have I no power to stay?
Are both my person and my speech unknown?
My graceful arms I stretch forth yearningly.
For thee, dear heart, I have moaned heavy moan."

His eyes are holden, and he doth not see.
Her pleading accents reach not to his ear.
Lost in his thought, he measureth the lea,
Nor knoweth that his mirrored soul is near.
But princely sir Palomides, the knight
Of the Round Table, blameless cavalier,
Erst cradled in the land of orient light,
Hath overheard her bitter, sore, lament,
And, pitiful of her neglected plight,
O'er the brown grasses of the sunburned bent
Drew nigh unto the forlorn damosel.
"Madam," he saith, "I change not, nor repent.
True was the promise, from my lips which fell.
Secure mine olden covenant I keep,
And troth I plighted at the wayside well.
Who soweth falsehood, let him falsehood reap.
As I be constant to the faith I swore,
God grant me pleasant days and quiet sleep.
The noble birthright of my sires of yore
I barter not for friendship, or for gold,
Nor doth oblivion steal my senses o'er.
No craven, but in hour of peril bold,
Steadfast of purpose, mine own mind I know.
'Tis ill from true man credence to withhold.
Yon knight is neither tyrannous, nor foe.
To his liege-lord, ay, damosel, to me,
His elder-born, he doth allegiance owe,
And shall submit himself to my decree.

Nay but himself he will injurious claim
Remit, of nature bountiful and free."

Down from her palfrey lighted the fair dame.
Upon the greensward meekly kneeled she down.
"My lips have sinned. I have been much to blame,"
She said: "yet on thy goodness set the crown.
By the dear love thy tender mother bore,
Thy father's greatness, thine own earned renown,
Pardon the fault I penitent deplore,
That am a woman, half distraught in mind,
So God forsaken I had faith no more,
So weighed with sorrow, that my wit was blind.
My tongue was traitor, but my thoughts unsay
My foolish words, and scatter them in wind."

"Nay," quoth he, "madam, rise and come away.
Doublet the taunt of petticoat may brook.
Vex not thy true love with too long delay.
He waiteth yonder, with expectant look.
Coy diffidence, that bar to lovers' bliss,
Away with." In his hand her hand he took,
Raised up, and to her own Epinogris
Guided her weak step overthwart the lea:
"Sir, greet thy lady with a loving kiss.
The lost is found, and brought again to thee.
Ye mourning turtles, on each other gaze.
Cling, gentle ivy, to thy kindly tree.
Grow ye together in a joined embrace.
The sun is shining on thy leaves again,
Uplift, sweet flower, the petals of thy face."

Too sudden happiness is very pain,
It doth disturb the spirit from its seat,
And clog the wheel, that worketh in the brain.
Mayhap in air they disembodied greet;
Rigid their earthen continents and still,
As images devoid of living heat,
As Galatea beautiful and chill,

Till young Pygmalion stirred her marble sleep.
Joy is not mortal, though it seem to kill.
The motioned senses, reawakening, peep
Out of the windows of the conscious eyes.
The trance is ended. Happy tears they weep,
Breathe broken words and inarticulate sighs:
"Ermine, my lily, mine handfasted bride."
"Epinogris, in whom my solace lies."

"In the wild wolf-haunt and the forest wide,
By brambly brake," he said, "and reedy mere,
Who was thy guard and comforter and guide?
Women are timorous and full of fear,
Too weak to combat, nor with strength to fly.
I deemed thee far, but I behold thee near."

The gentle Ermine hasted to reply:
"Oh! sorrowful my soul at nooning hour,
Helpless and handmaid of necessity.
A god himself, beneficent in power,
Out of the paw of lion and of bear
Delivered me, my refuge and strong tower.
He set me free from burden of my care.
Both I, my sweet Epinogris, and thou,
Are loosed by him from pitfall and from snare."

Said the good knight, Palomides: "I trow,
Joy have I, gentle lovers, in ye both,
As should mine own love listen to my vow.
Make not content your harbinger of sloth.
Let noble thought be spur to lofty deed,
Though laggard flesh be naturally loath.
Thee, youth, let honour as a lode-star lead,
Thou be the rose, that in his garden bloom,
Till both ye ripen to celestial seed,
And laid at rest, within the doorless room,
Men heap above your bones one common mound.
Oh, fragrant death! Oh, memorable tomb!
Young men and maidens to that holy ground

Shall wend on a frequented pilgrimage,
And votive offerings bring, with cypress crowned.
When we, who stalk upon this worldly stage,
And play our part, in pageant of our pride,
Have made our exit, to long after age,
To the world's dotage, shall your names abide,
Embalmed in legend and in minstrel lay,
So glued together, death cannot divide."

Words like to these doth the Far-wanderer say.
But lo! sir Safire cometh o'er the bent,
In the dim twilight and the waning ray.
He gazeth on that amorous pair, intent,
Who lovingly their wreathéd arms entwine.
His soul within doth pitiful relent.
"The glorious vintage of thy goodly vine
Be for another. I forsake," he said,
"All claim. I to this bond set seal, and sign.
For other, not for me, put veil on head.
My title-deed I cancel and destroy.
Linked in one fellowship of board and bed,
Together dwell in sorrow and in joy,
Till death depart you. Pity 'twere and shame,
By the bent bow of Cupid, the blind boy,
And Lady Venus, mistress of the game,
Two to dispart, so constant and so tried,
To quench the torch of Hymeneal flame,
To sunder dear one from the dear one's side;
By the Great Demiurge, the world who wrought,
I not divorce the bridegroom and the bride."

"Sirs," answered sir Epinogris, "but nought
Are words, and thankful heart is barren meed;
Yet, in the generous bosom, grateful thought
Is willing usance paid for loan of deed.
Our mourning sables and our garb of woe
Ye bid us put off, and wear festal weed.
Our sullen fast ye change and diet low
To Yuletide mirth and wanton holiday.

Lords, great the debt is, that we mutual owe,
My love and I, beyond our means to pay.
Most, oh my lord Palomides, to thee
I deem me bounden, in no common way,
Who, fountain of my full felicity,
Didst, by the sweat and labour of thy pain,
Enfeoff me master of a golden fee,
And draw my lady to mine arms again.
Heaven yield its blessing, and augment thy store!
Love, vainly looked for, prove not alway vain!
One sweet as Isolde, than first Isolde more,
Her soft arms open, and thou folded rest;
And kindly peace lodge habitant indoor!"

CANTO VI

Now hath Apollo stabled in the West
The flaming coursers of his golden wain ;
Mute grow the cawing rooks in elm-top nest ;
The glow-worm's lamp is lit in shadowed lane ;
The dim stars twinkle, poised in darkening sky ;
Tuwhit, tuwhoo, doth the vague owl complain ;
The film-winged bat is flitting eerily ;
The dew is wet on tender herb of mead ;
The grey wolf barketh with uneasy cry.
The careful hermit, robed in russet weed,
Hied forth. He friendly voice before him sent :
" From frugal dish an ye have will to feed
On meats for profit, not for idlesse, meant,
Sons, all is ready. We have curds in bowls,
Pressed cheeses, that the mother goat hath lent,
And barley cakes, well baken on the coals,
Sharp cresses, which the neighbour brook doth give,
With mingled sallets, food for simple souls,
And honey, filchéd from no woven hive,
But the deep cavern of a yawning tree.
But not by bread alone, believe, men live.
Look not, my sons, upon my board to see
The flesh of venison, or flesh of beeves—
In brotherhood of nature one with me
All living things beneath these forest leaves—
No, nor the rash intoxicant of wine,
At eve which gladdens, and at morning grieves.

Such sweet simplicities of life are mine.
A meagre feast. But I, with right good will,
Do bid ye welcome in the Name divine."

"We roaming knights with husks our bellies fill,
And make a banquet of a mouldy crust,"
Said the good knight Palomides. "'Tis ill
To bind the body prentice to the lust.
A dish of potherbs is no banyan fare,
When eaten at the tables of the just.
At courtly revel doth black-visaged care
Sit guest, and envy stand behind and wait.
Our meats, but not our appetites, are there.
Better to sup with good man than with great.
Father, I doubt, too troublesome we be,
Who knocked, as sturdy beggars, at thy gate."
The grey-haired sire made answer courteously:
"Sere oak in younger sapling hath delight,
Winter in spring. Thou dost not trouble me,
Who love the converse of a worthy knight.
Sweet 'tis at vesper to remember prime.
The veteran soldier, seamed in earlier fight,
Joyeth to chat with gallants of new time.
But, gentle guests, our viands wait, and we
Prate idle words. No reason, and no rhyme."

Sir Safire then: "Still, prithee, hear my plea!
Good father, we not unprovided ride,
In wilding path, and under leaféd tree,
Nor trust to provand of bare countryside.
Let not the plainness of my speech offend,
Who sudden guest, at unexpected tide,
Your rustic commons have desire to mend
With savoury kid-flesh, that hath smelled the fire.
Ay, but to trencher should be beaker friend.
Of water from the well our lay lips tire.
Lo! yonder panniers carry freight of wine,
And readied meats, to pay our lodging's hire."
He thus, then to his varlet gave the sign.

"Friend," said the gownéd seer of mildest mood,
"I could but offer what in store was mine.
All creatures, that our God hath made, are good,
If men enjoy them in well ordered way,
Nor turn to poison, what was meant for food.
There is a time for laughter and for play.
There is a time for watching and for prayer,
And daily task, that endeth with the day,
And kindly sleep, sweet solvent of our care.
Men cannot all at high perfection aim.
And saintly souls, alack! on earth are rare.
E'en Christ himself to marriage supper came.
The creed of Christ is no inhuman creed.
Not every pleasure meriteth his blame.
To discipline the soul to pious deed
The sparing life and abstinent is best.
Yet something is allowed to grosser need.
Is not good host the servant of his guest?
Study thy will. Make none apology.
Heaven send ye pleasant mirth and healthful rest!"

A fire was lit beneath the Druid tree.
The group of spearmen sate and supped around.
They ate, they drank, they carolled lustily:
How to Cunobelin, the golden-crowned,[1]
An eldritch carle, upon a Lammas day,
Came, bearing gifts to Verulam renowned,
A purfled mantle, hemmed with broidery gay,[2]
Of woven sendal and Cathaian sheen,
Wherewith the wife of Cæsar might array
Her stately limbs, or the fair Palmyrene,[3]
With prick of needle curiously wrought,
Meet for the back of empress or of queen.
In Verulam he sate, that monarch haught.
Bold in the presence spake this eldritch wight:
'Sire, may the counsels of thy foes be naught!
Speed thy war-chariot in victorious fight!
She, whom proud Reged and the North obey,[4]
This tribute sendeth to thy sceptred might,

Which at the footstool, by command, I lay,
Cunobelin, of thine uplifted throne.
Seven captive brides, through the long night and day,
Wept, and did work the finger to the bone,
To perfect it with art and maistery,
In intermediate land of Oberon.
The like, sir king, thy treasure cannot buy.
For marriage bond doth any lightly care,
The mocking world her nakedness shall spy;
Who breaketh troth, she will go shamed and bare,
That in this mantle thinketh to go brave,
Who weeneth it, too hardily, to wear,
But playeth in her husband's bed the knave.
Honour and worship the true heart shall win,
Who keepeth well the promise that she gave.'

Then, by his gods, sware good Cunobelin:
'Our comely ladies are as chaste as fair,
Nor stoop to lewdness of committed sin.
In battle hour we Britons greatly dare.
No coward drop in British heart is found.'
This, by his gods, Cunobelin did swear.

He holdeth court in Verulam renowned.
Baron and knight, and princes of the kin,
And many a dame and damosel wait round.
Now, ladies fair, your ordeal doth begin.
Let every dame and damosel be yare.[5]
Look each her coat be not too thread-bare thin.
Baron and knight, they look askance, they stare.
Each coifèd dame sore mischief doth befall.
As mother-born, so naked and so bare,
With fire-red face, with screeching and with squall,
To chamber forth each hastily hath hied,
Wroth and ashamed, she gat her out from hall.
Last Tegan-Euvron, meek and gentle eyed,
Dear to Caradoc, Britain's spearman true,
In knot of Hymen to Caradoc tied,
The fairy web o'er her white shoulders threw.

Ah! but it crinkled, in a pucker caught,
Above the latchet of her small, neat, shoe.

'Bow down, oh mantle! shame me not for nought,'
She cried. 'If once, upon a morn of May,
I met my bachelor, in wood, unsought,
And, kissed, rekissed him, I came maid away,
Nor lewdly thought, nor did the deed of sin,
Till consummation of my marriage day,
When torch was lit, and bells made merry din,
Then, holily, when nuptial psalm was sung,
I blushing lay mine husband's arms within.'
Shriven, by the frank confession of her tongue,
From blameless blemish, her white soul is clean,
That, as a daughter of the gods among
The gaping crowd, and garmented in sheen,
Perfect she stood. Each knight and baron cried:
'All honour to this leal and loving queen!
All honour to the duke Caradoc's bride!
In hallowed bed such bedfellow still be!
Like shames each foul adulteress betide!'

Their camp-fire round, beneath the greenwood tree,
These hymned such ballad of an old-world day,
Rude shell of an enshrinéd mystery.
But sir Epinogris in slumber lay,
In solar chamber, upon upper floor,
Within the lodging of the hermit grey.
Till the stars darken, and the night is o'er,
Sweet Ermine watcheth him with pleasant eyes,
In simples skilled and the physician's lore,
Neat-handed ministrant, if need arise;
But softly sir Epinogris doth sleep,
In solar chamber, where he curtained lies.

In the fair parlour, where he wont to keep,
The peaceful hermit and the soldier twain
Are set at supper. He doth platter heap,
With courteous urging and old-fashioned pain:

"Sirs, we but starve you. Ye do nothing eat."
Hunger, that sauce, which epicures disdain,
Addeth a homely relish to the meat,
Till the keen edge of larger appetite
Grow blunted, then doth kiss of wine seem sweet.

Now doth sir Safire challenge and invite
The saintly man to beaker of red wine:
"Fair father, we have taken sup and bite
With thee, but after meal men's souls incline
To merriment and to forget dull care.
Put lip unto this daughter of the vine."
He shook his head: "Son, simple is my fare.
I eat from garden, and I drink from well.
I judge not others, but my thought prepare
To cross the dark stream, on whose bord I dwell.
Soon will my years of pilgrimage be done,
Soon, very soon, will toll my funeral bell."
He said, nor sipped, but passed the beaker on
To the good knight, Palomides. But he
Drank deep, until the gold, at bottom, shone.

Oh! sweet the juice of the fair vineyard tree,
The noble gift that God to Noah gave,
From carking care the poor it setteth free,
It stirreth mirth in bosom staid and grave,
It addeth to the churl a bounteous mind;
The kiss of wine doth make the coward brave.
Such virtues in the trodden grape we find;
'Tis mother of the thoughts, that burn and glow,
'Tis sister of the lyre, for joy designed,
Our comforter, and eke our deadly foe,
A kindly physic, or a lethal bane,
To lift man Godward, or to hell sink low.

The goblet starteth on its round again.
Yet reverent, as who sit in holy place,
They set a bridle on the lips, and rein
The thought, and season all their talk with grace;
For but to look upon the good old man

Is as to look upon an angel's face.
"Fair brother," sir Palomides began,
"Was not the gentle Segwaride with thee,
When sleuth-hounds, in the long pursuit, ye ran,
Tracking my steps, through vine-clad Italy,
To citron groves of Andalusian Spain,
Home of pomegranate and of orange tree,
Thence to the coast, where Agusance doth reign,
The sceptred father of the proud Isolde,
Where church bells ring, inviolate domain
Of clerkly priests and long-haired warriors bold,
Whence to the ward of Camelot ye came,
That lofty citadel, renowned of old,
Where royal Arthur and his beauteous dame,
Girt with the barons of the Table Round,
Hold yearly festival, with martial game?
Tell me, my brother, is he yet on ground,
Young Segwaride, that he be not with thee?
With noble promise was his boyhood crowned,
Frank, debonnair, high-couraged, liberal, free.
Living or dead? In other land, or nigh?
Him can I hope, or cannot hope to see?"

Courtly sir Safire hasted to reply:
"Fair brother, when we lodged in Camelot,
And sought for tidings, hid from looking eye
Thou wast, upon adventure ridden, God wot.
Then Segwaride, our last-born, spake to me:
Hounds run together, when the scent is hot,
But, at a check, they quarter all the lea.
Ride thou to northward. I to southward ride.
And so, betwixt us, will one hear, or see.
Good was his counsel. We the task divide.
He to the tower of hoary Tyntagil,
Wave-beaten by the wild Atlantic tide,
Aloft it standeth, on its island hill;
Marke, coward husband of the queen Isolde,
There sitteth, stubborn man of perverse will.
Thither his course our Segwaride doth hold.

By beaten track, and unfrequented lane,
I wend to north, and search in wood and wold,
Who reap this hour sweet harvest of my pain.
And now the message I commissioned bear,
Inscribed upon the tablet of my brain,
Our mother's message, let my lips declare:
Thou son of high-aspiring Astlabor,
My firstborn, and thy father's glorious heir,
My child, return; thy mother doth implore.
Thy sire is dead. The barons wait thy reign.
Thou lingerest too long on foreign shore."

"Not so," quoth sir Palomides again.
"The ploughman, that hath put his hand to plough,
Doth he turn back, or leave the furrowed plain,
Before his darg be done? I vowed a vow,
To dwell, as christened man, in Christendom,
In idol temple nevermore to bow,
Nor sit at meat, where Satan hath his home.
Shall I the Spirit of the woods adore,
Or mocking daughter of the lakelet foam,
Or shaggy Demon of the mountain hoar,
Or lift mine eyes unto the stars, which move,
Or kiss mine hand, when mount Hyperion o'er.
Nay, gentle brother, by the God above,
To motherland I will no more return,
Who worship Christ, not Capitoline Jove.
I burn not incense, where I used to burn.
The purblind may be monarch of the blind.
Whose eyes are opened better to discern,
He stayeth not upon the murk behind,
But aimeth at the cross and crown before.
I have my country with my gods resigned.
Wealth have I, by the mother, who me bore,
Goods I have gotten me with sword and spear,
Beyond my spending, and I lack no more.
For neither loving wife, nor children dear,
I have to further with providing care.
Within this realm I have a duty near.

Let whoso will become my father's heir.
I curb the Sessoyne with a strong right hand.
The brood of Hengist them too proudly bear.
In battle for the cause of God I stand,
Sworn of the fellowship of Table Round,
And keep from scathe the pleasant Garden land."

Thus sir Palomides, that peer renowned.
Sir Safire drank: "I bid my land adieu!
For never shall my foot press native ground
Without thee, nor its breath of spices woo
My cheek without thee. Brother, if thy soul
Be fixed to tarry, then I tarry too.
Spare not to sip the nectar of the bowl.
When brethren meet, the night should festal be.
The present hour is given us to control.
Who knoweth his to-morrow's destiny?
Mourning may tread upon the heels of mirth,
And tuneless wail outvoice the cithern's glee."

"The goods of Fortune are but little worth,"
Said sir Palomides. "Brother, 'twere best,
As this good hermit, negligent of earth,
Heavenward to look, and seek the better rest.
Yet, if myself I throughly know, I dare
Endure her arrows, and have armed my breast
To bear with patience, what a man must bear.
Would that the gentle Segwaride were by!
How the leaves whisper to the moving air!
Oh! listen, where, from bushy covert nigh,
Doth Philomel in song her soul bewray.
She filleth all the shaws with melody.
Hark! how it murmur on its hidden way,
The runnel, hasting, as it seaward glide,
Toward flowery meadows, lit with moonbeam ray."

"Ay," quoth the hermit, "where God's finger guide,
Its work to do, then, gathered to the main,
Ascend in vapour, on the cloud to ride,

To fall again in the sweet shower of rain.
There is a sermon in the running brook;
It speaketh us in parable full plain."

But sir Palomides the beaker took
In his two hands: "Brother, I drink to thee.
God look upon thee with a kindly look,
And add unto thy health prosperity!
But, brother, if it irk not, prithee, tell
The purport of thy borrowed heraldry.
That lion crowned, I know the blazon well.
Ector de Maris should it proudly bear.
Hath stainless Ector heard his dying knell?
Fareth he thither, where must all men fare?
When I walked privily within the wood,
To shield me from the sun and scorching glare,
This knight, I said, *by his great hardihood,*
Hath overthrown the lion in his pride.
He weareth armour, which he won in blood.
As thou didst issue from the covert side,
So said I. Greatly me my soul misgives.
Who may the feud of Launcelot abide?"

"Ill feud hath he, who with lord Launcelot strives,"
Sir Safire said, "dear brother, but my hand
Is guiltless of the lion's death. He lives.
It happened I was riding upon land,
Yestreen, and did encounter with a knight,
And broke a spear. I would unsheath my brand.
No, said he. *We not inimical fight.*
We do but gently breathe ourselves on plain,
To test our manhood. Why should falchion bite?
Undimmed in scabbard let thy steel remain.
I granted; and we faith and friendship swore,
Then rode together, in a storm of rain,
To the fair shelter of a friendly door,
And, chamber-fellows, we made brothers' cheer.
But the black tempest with the night was o'er.
When the blithe sun in unflecked heaven shone clear,

Then we broke fast, and took our arms to go.
Fair fellow, quoth he, while we donned our gear,
I seek within a park a milkwhite doe,
Who shun yet by the ranger to be kenned.
Sir, of thy courtesy, such grace bestow,
As give me leave to borrow purse of friend.
Take thou mine armour, which I use to wear,
And deign thine armour to my need to lend.
Assent I lightly yielded to his prayer.
Fair brother, hence in other mien I ride,
That not my birth mine armature declare."

"Ah, brother!" sir Palomides replied,
"We had not foughten at this close of day,
Had but mine eye true cognisance descried.
But I myself have changed mine old array.
Yet all is well, if but it endeth well.
At times will by-path bring to broad highway."

"There is a story, that I fain would tell,
An that ye care to listen," said the sage;
"How Balin and his brother Balan fell,[6]
Two men, the foremost in a warrior age,
Their like for hardihood I seld have seen.
No better champion ever lifted gage.
'Twas in the year of Guenever made queen,[7]
The lovely daughter of Leodgrance sere,
Who looked on Arthur, through the lattice screen,
When wroth he did his flame-hued Dragon rear,
And smote the leaguer of the host, which lay
'Fore Carohaise and filled men's hearts with fear.
She dropped her kerchief. But from point I stray.
Leave we to talk of golden Guenever,
How Arthur wooed and of her wedding day.
Enough. 'Twas in the year he bedded her.
The fault of old men is prolixity.
Friends, grant me pardon, if I tedious err.

" There doth in the mid heart of forest lie,
Haunt of the wild swan, a pellucid mere:
There is a castle, set that lakelet by,
Whose towers are imaged in the glassy clear.
Ill were the customs of the God-banned place,
Till Launcelot, with all prevailing spear,
Foredid them, holpen of our Lady's grace.
Whatever knight drew to the guarded bound,
By miry path and unfrequented ways,
Caught in the net of that enchanted ground,
Must with his body serve the châtelaine.
Who lodging sought an evil lodging found.
The morrow morn was usher to his bane.
He, whom she feasted in her halls at e'en,
Must slay to-morrow, or himself be slain.
For on the bosom of the pond is seen
An islet, which the lapping waves embrace,
As smooth and level as a bowling green,
For knightly combats meet and jousting plays.
By wicked craft and nigromantic skill,
She bringeth it about, if any slays
Him of that isle, he may not leave at will,
Himself the warden, till some hardier knight
Prevail against him, and his life blood spill.
Thither came Balan, in the gloaming light,
At season, when doth oak with ash tree vie
To put forth leafage, when the thorn is white
With fragrant blossom, and the summer nigh.
But Balin at the fall-time of the year,
He doubly girded, with two swords on thigh,[8]
When the leaves wither, and the woods are sere,
Knocked at the portal of the guarded hall,
Where ladies welcome him with seeming cheer.
Omen could not his mighty heart appal,
Nor turn him back from predetermined road:
The lettered cross, the death mort's sounded call,[9]
The hoary stranger, with his word of bode:
His prescient soul within him darkly knew
The coming doom, that they, foretokening, showed.

The dainty ladies trim their house anew,
The flag-stone floor they with fresh rushes spread,
Such viands bring as second hunger woo,
And costly vintage, that the grape hath bled;
They dance to viol and to psaltery,
And lead him weary to delight of bed.
Sleep drew the fringéd curtain of his eye.
Yet up was Balin, ere the rising sun,
When first the dawn put roses in the sky.
His fated cord the Destinies have spun,
Now living man, to-night a lump of clay.
In prime of manhood his career is run.
Sir Balan rode upon a charger bay.
Gules was his armour, sanguine gules his shield,
The castle livery not his own array.
His haughty trumpet biddeth to the field.
Sir, to sir Balin said a knight of worth,[10]
Yon knight is dour, he mighty lance doth wield.
Thy speech doth show thee from the kindly North,
The kindly North, where I myself was born.
I prithee, go not to the combat forth
With wounded buckler. Thine is rent and torn,
So many hacks it hath. If to thy mind
Be mine, then take it to thy use this morn.
Sir Balin hearkened, and his shield resigned.
So, seeking for more safety, death he found.
So dull is man and ignorantly blind.
Grim fight they fought, within that island bound,
From matin hour almost till vespertide.
Great gash each dealt, and more than mortal wound.
Each breathed his life out at his brother's side.
Who both within one mother's womb had lain,
Their buried bones one common tomb doth hide.
Oh, fatal jousts! Oh, lamentable bane!
Oh, wonted ensign to great loss laid by!
Else, Balan's hand had not his brother slain,
Nor Balin's might a brother given to die.
Their deeds and they are sepulchred in stone.
Their epitaph an old man's memory.

"Sirs, in the books of herald we be shown,
  Ourselves, our houses, and our cadency,
  Our arms, our crests, the mottoes that we own,
Who boast ourselves of gentleman's degree.
  Herein doth noble differ from the knave,
  Peer to the king in glorious chivalry,
A debt he oweth to his father's grave,
  To gild the blazon that his father bore,
  Just, loyal, generous, in battle brave,
To be the bulwark of his native shore.
  The mean man may his action shroud in night,
  Who set aloft is, men observe him more.
He beareth all his honours in their sight.
  The cottage may in valley lie perdue;
  The castle standeth on illumined height."

CANTO VII

"Old man," said sir Palomides, "thou too,
Who dwellest now, in savage wood, alone,
Hast been, where point of war the trumpet blew,
And courts and counsels of great kings hast known.
Consent the curtain of the past to raise,
The tardy night is yet but little flown.
Thou calendar of half forgotten days,
I prithee, by the tie of broken bread,
Upon the tablet of our memory trace
The deeds of some, who rest in glory's bed,
In this still hour, if we not weary thee.
In former battles thou hast fought and bled,
And, pattern of an antique chivalry,
Didst bear a part, when Uther smote of old
The banded rovers of the burdened sea."

"By minstrel lips, let such a tale be told,
The praise is nought, wherewith himself one praise,"
The sage made answer. "Cloud of time hath rolled,
And hidden all the past in mist of haze.
But, friends, if slumber on your leaden eyes
Yet weigh not, as on mine it little weighs,
I, from the garden of my memories,
Will, at your bidding, pluck a flower or twain,
Wherein if pleasing, or if profit, lies,
I have reward. Long preface is long pain.
King Uther, in his hour of victory,

Dubbed me, sir Ulfin, knight on battle plain.[1]
Great was my having, gold and lands in fee,
And many vassals, when I lifted spear,
Took horse, and to the foray rode with me.
When dreadful war our native bourne came near,
And Sessoyne foot defiled the pleasant sod,
With glorious Uther, on that day of fear,
I played the man for the good land and God.
We broke them. Thrice did that strong warrior break
Their phalanx. On the neck of kings he trod.
His vengeful ire did blood of princes slake.
He shook the White Horse with a sore dismay,
The ceded frontier did again retake,
And ruled his people, with regardful sway,
From Camelot, the palace of his pride.
Yet Uther walked not in the perfect way,
Who rashly put God's covenant aside,
And followed after vain philosophy,
The subtle snare, that Satan doth provide,
To make us bondmen, who believe us free;
He loved the godless revel and lewd jest,
The wanton dance, the night of lechery,
A king, not to be counted with the best,
A soldier in his act heroical,
God chosen to be Shepherd of the West.
Our pleasant vices do delude us all,
Fair to the seeming, but their after bite
Is full of venom and of serpent gall.
With lustful eyes upon the beauty bright
He looked of the white pearl of Tyntagil,
Who shone a moon amid the stars of light.
She would not yield her to his wicked will,
Nor the chaste bed of gentle Gorloïs stain,
Then with sharp sword he did her true lord kill,
Her, ere her moon of widowhood did wane,
He forced reluctant to new marriage bed,
To mate with him, by whom her lord was slain.
God's wrath was hot for blood of Gorloïs shed,
And for the tears of that fair Cornish flower.

The brood of Hengist rear anew their head.
Grim war and pestilence the land devour.
In Camelot, the palace of his pride,
Uther is sick. The big heavens darkly lower.
The godless spearmen harry far and wide.
The wolves of Woden are broke loose from chain.
Hither and thither the wild horsemen ride.
Their leaguer camp is set on Sarum plain.
The towers of Sarum, from their lofty mound,
The might of Wessex front in proud disdain.
Each Kentish thane, the lords of Essex bound,
The swarms of Southsexe and of Southerye,
As eagles gather, at the clarion sound.
A thousand galleys, o'er the wine-dark sea,
Flock to the feast of raven and of kite,
And all the legioned host of Germany.
Their haughty trumpets challenge to the fight.
Uther is stirred. He bade his bugles blow,
His banners march, and, ringed with lances bright,
On litter borne, he striketh at his foe.
He gathered laurels with a failing hand,
And dying smote them, till the sun was low.
Soldier of God and of his native land,
Him God assoil from bitter pains of hell!
A sinful man, yet mighty with the brand,
In battle hour he did his devoir well.
Christ add unto the king's the martyr's crown!
Christ grant his soul in Paradise to dwell!
We laid him on his field of honour down,
And raised above his bones a glorious tomb.
As beaten men then, mournfully, we bowne
On several road. In the great Captain's room,
The spears of Britain brooked no meaner head,
Till Arthur, the sweet fruit of Igrayne's womb,
Begot by Uther in a pleasant bed,
The cap and complement of chivalry,
God showed by miracle in Uther's stead.[2]

"Sirs, to burn candles is no husbandry.
The soldier should keep hours of peasant swain,
Rise with the lark, and down at curfew lie.
He purchaseth his ease with equal pain.
Good night! God grant unto ye fair repose,
Till with new day begin new toil again."

Then kindly sleep did each tired eyelid close.
The world was stilled in quiet hush of night,
Till ruddily the sun at morning rose,
To quicken all with his reviving light.
The birds are twittering in leafy lair.
The cheery lark doth pious souls invite,
Aloft in cloud, and set in middle air:
Forsake your bed, children of men, arise;
Pay to the Lord your oraison of prayer,
For daily bread, that shall to need suffice,
For present aid, should troublous foe dismay,
For good success in each good enterprise,
For heavenly grace to keep the better way.
So sang the lark, and all the wing-borne choir
Join in glad chorus, greeting the new day.
The village churl, who laboureth for hire,
Starteth for field, his mattock in his hand;
Now doth the smith forge weapon at the fire;
His cloth the shopman measure with ell-wand;
Student his script, urchin his horn-book heed;
The soldier buckle to his side the brand;
Priest to his mass, nun to her counted bead,
Housewife to daily moil, maiden to spin,
Or in and out of clout the needle lead.
The working world its business doth begin;
This to his farm, that to his merchandise.
Such penalty we pay for Adam's sin.
Whose souls would upward unincumbered rise
Are borne down, weighted by a loaf of bread,
They cannot mount up to their natural skies.

The Clyde-born to the knights, his fellows, said,
When fast was broken, at that morning-tide:

"Ye princely brothers, I much blood have bled;
Great hurts I took, and wound both deep and wide;
The burden of mine arms I cannot bear;
On ambling barb I may make shift to ride.
Beyond this forest, and the fernbrake lair
Of hart and roebuck, under the Great Wain,
Is a fair castle in a champaign fair,
There watch and ward strict sentinels maintain,
My mother's heritage, which I, her son,
Oft occupy, without my father's reign.
If but betimes the journey be begun,
Ere the day darken, and the night descend,
Methinks, we to that harbour will have won.
Yourselves, your horses, shall my servants tend,
Your steeds be stabled in commodious stall,
My caterer your forest fast amend,
And harper harp, for your delight, in hall,
The brimming bowl with merriment go round,
Till, sated, ye for torch and chamber call.
Sirs, if so much your gentleness abound,
As to conduct, with Ermine, my fair bride,
Me through the rough wood and the wilding ground,
To taste my salt, and as my guests abide,
Your urgent business from you put one hour,
Lay, for a little, shield and helm aside.
Then Ermine shall have rest in pleasant bower,
Nor fear the prickle, when she touch the rose,
Secure with me, within my moated tower."

They said: "Sweet sir, with willing heart we close
With this thy proffer, and our spearman train
Shall be thy warrant, if thou meet with foes.
For law is weak, where hath the red deer lain,
And might is right beneath the clustering trees.
Our noble manhood it would greatly stain
To leave thee fenceless, in such haunts as these,
Or put in jeopardy thy loving fere,
To be the booty for strong thief to seize."

The steeds are brought. Jackman and cavalier,
With countess Ermine, meekly kneel on mould.
They crave the blessing of that old man sere.
"Sirs, in just quarrel may your hearts be bold!
God keep you through the peril of the day!
God in the hollow of his hand you hold,
Your guide, the signpost to direct your way!
Children, remember, that ye walk in sight.
Wait not for leisure, during work-hour pray.
Abate the wrong, prove buttress of the right;
Be filthy lust and covetise denied;
Yourselves the fiercest enemies ye fight,
Fail not through fault of stubbornness and pride.
My gentle daughter, if one secret sin
Defile thee, yet for thee the Saviour died
On painful cross, that thou might'st pardon win,
And gracious penitence can wash thee clean.
Not shut the gate, but thou may'st enter in
To sit with her, who was the Magdalene.
God bring thee safe to life's untroubled end!
God grant us all to meet in heavenly scene!"
His aged arms he, speaking, did extend
To bless them, as who God's commission bore.
They mount. Along the forest path they wend.
Wistful, that old man watcheth from his door.
They cross the greensward, and are lost to sight,
In the deep bosom of that oakwood hoar.
"Have mercy, Jesu! this fair paynim knight,
So full of kindliness and courtesy,
Succour, uphold him, in his sevenfold fight!
Of other fold, yet gather him to thee!
Oh! many a christened man, in Christendom,
Is further wandered from the road than he.
His father's riches he hath left and home
To fight thy battle, Lord, on northern shore.
At call of trumpet, and at beat of drum,
Aye prompt, he christened is in Sessoyne gore,
And payeth honour to the sinless Maid,
The sinless Maid, the sinless child who bore."

Thus, looking upward to the heavens, he prayed,
Then doth his labour mingle with his prayer.
The wild birds greet him, out of woodland glade,
With joyous welcoming, from peopled air.
His flowers he tendeth, this sweet morn of May,
And blesseth God, who made the world so fair.

The riders pass adown the greenwood way,
Beside the freshet of the brawling stream,
That chafeth, if a stock or stone delay
Its onward progress to the sunnier gleam,
Beneath a roof of interlacing leaves,
The Pixies' playground, as the woodmen deem.
The wild wood-sorrel on the brown earth weaves,
Green, silver-spangled, on a noiseless floor,
A fairer carpet than our wit achieves.
The lords and ladies of our childish lore,
The purple loosestrife, with the wilding pea,
And orchises, and hyacinths, good store,
And loveliness of frail anemoné,
Join with snapdragon, and with cuckoo-flower,
And mary-golds, that show, where marish be,
And blooms, that last but till the sunset hour,
The morning-glories of the summer day,
And ferns, the shade that cherish and the shower.
Sweet is the wood with blossom of the may,
And blithe the murmur of the running wave;
Mavis and merle and missel-thrush are gay,
And trilling goldfinch, from his leafy cave,
Maketh atonement with note so divine,
Men must forget the mischief of the knave.
They ride in forest, with observant eyne,
And note the passage of the long-eared hare,
Timid of all, if a cloud dim the shine,
Or a leaf quiver, in the moving air,
Or mark the dun deer, as he fleeteth by,
Or coucheth, vigilant, in bracken lair,
Or the red fox, who scenteth stranger nigh,

And calleth to her little ones at play :
They heed and vanish out of sight of eye.

The company proceed upon their way,
Under the meeting arches of tall treen,
'Mid mossy stems, and trunks with lichen grey,
And undergrowth with leaf of lighter green.
They halt awhile for the meridian heat,
Then mount again : until, toward fall of e'en,
An open country doth their vision greet,
With hedgerows, and with meadows ringed with trees ;
There heifers low, there fleecy mothers bleat,
Tended of shepherd, clad in coat of frieze ;
Milkmaid, in russet, goeth trippingly,
Demure, and curtsies, when the knights she sees,
Bearing her pail, half confident, half shy ;
And loaded wains with bells make music fair :
Soon apple-orchards show the village nigh.
Bark noisy curs, and brown-eyed children stare.
The lass, upon her spinning task intent,
Hath eased her wheel, and doth her hand forbear,
To view the troopers mount the steep ascent,
Whereon are visible, in sunset ray,
Walls turreted, and crown of battlement,
An old-world fortress, weather-beaten, grey.
Up with portcullis ! let the drawbridge fall !
The horse-hoofs thunder on the wooden way.
The ready grooms lead the tired steeds to stall.
Sweet Ermine is of maidens borne to bower.
The knights, unarmed, are set at meat in hall.
" Fair sirs, a kindly welcome to my tower,"
Said sir Epinogris, " honoured am I ;
To mine and me most fortunate this hour.
Ye Dioscuri, stars of upper sky,
Who tread, as visitants, our meaner earth,
I greet you with all loving courtesy,
As royal in your actions, as your birth.
Friends, do not spare the viands or the wine.
Your own desire be measure of your mirth.

A weary man, bedward my thoughts incline,
For my wound irks me: but my seneschal,
Of old my mother's servitor, now mine,
Take in my stead to rule your festival.
When let of blood, and harmful lesion, grieve,
Sure, quiet sleep is the best leech of all.
I pray ye mine excuses to receive."
With courtesy then bowed to left, to right,
Put lip to cup, and did the banquet leave,
First wishing to them all a fair good night.
"Sirs, sit ye down," said the grey seneschal;
"Yon walls of pasty your assault invite.
Unto the soul of kitchener 'tis gall,
If the full dish depart as full, untried.
It is his grief, if appetite be small.
Ye, that abroad upon adventure ride,
Hunger and thirst, and heat and cold, ye know,
And couch, at times, on a bed great and wide,
The windy down, when the shrewd Norther blow;
In armour, on a summer noon, ye sweat,
When fiery Phœbus, as a furnace, glow,
When simmer all the fields with oven-heat,
When dim the distant fells with blurring haze,
And air waves quiver o'er the tops of wheat.
For, verily, ye lead laborious days,
And with the beggar in his orts ye share.
Much evil men endure to win much praise.
In my hot youth I too did harness wear,
But now I hang, a rusted lance, in hall,
Since time hath set its silver on my hair."

Such words he spake, that ancient seneschal.
They sup. With jollity the night is crowned.
The silvern sconces gleam on panelled wall.
Full merrily doth wassail bowl go round.
Laughter and jest and jocund revelry
From rafters of the vaulted roof rebound.

Howel, the bard, his long locks flowing free,
Now steppeth forth. He striketh a wild chord,

Save Taliesin, prince of minstrelsy,[3]
The sweetest singer on the Northern bord :
How Lot of Loudon and of Orkney fell.[4]
Around him the wild din of battle roared.
He died a death, that did beseem him well,
He that his host with his own hands up-bore,
The slogan of the North his dying knell.
Outwearied, overmatched, forfoughten sore,
Borne down, he perished, in the van of fight,
By strokes of the resistless Pellinore.
Ah! pity was it, for his failing might.
Ah! pity was it, for the stumbling steed.
He did his devoir, as a valiant knight,
Where banners dance, and armies strive on mead.
God him assoil, and bring to better rest!
God loose the forfeit due to froward deed!
Yclad in armour, and with raven crest,
Heading the ghosts of his companions slain,
On the dun charger, that he loved the best,
In the murk midnight, in the storm and rain,
Abroad he rideth, when the winds are high,
And the great oak trees toss their arms in pain.
When moon, nor star, is seen in blotted sky,
When ocean billows boom with sullen roar,
Lot, with his horsemen, in the gloom goes by,
In such a habit as he living wore.
God grant unto that troubled spirit peace,
When the long penance of his weird is o'er!

"God give him rest!" said sir Palomides.
"He died, ere I set foot on British ground,
A paladin of noble qualities!
With greater glory was no monarch crowned.
Almost did wrong in him appear the right.
Much for his death was Pellinore renowned.
Yet blood with blood sir Gawaine did requite,[5]
Who, man to man, encountered Pellinore,
In the tenth year syne he was dubbed a knight."

He ceased, for Howel swept the chords once more,
Attuned to sweeter and to softer lay:
How Merlin passed unto the Breton shore,
With Vivian, that false but lovely fay.
Should frosty Winter woo the sweet-lipped Spring?
Should January wed with pleasant May?
Yet to sere oak will younger ivy cling,
And centuried elm betroth the yearling vine.
The laws of Cupid who may say or sing?
Old, old, was Merlin, but his hawk-like eyne
Undimmed. In age coeval with the crow,
Upright, unbending, as the mountain pine.
His sturdy step with gravity more slow.
White was his hair, and his long beard snow-white.
His withered cheek Time's traceries did show.
But she was young and beautiful and bright,
Rejoicing in her own great loveliness.
To look upon her was a mere delight.
Her lightest accent was a mute caress.
Proud to be loved, fatigued yet with a love
Beyond the compass of her shallow guess.
In her the serpent mingled with the dove.
Pacing on cream-hued jennet at his side,
Plot after plot, in busy brain, she wove
To loose the knot, which her consent had tied.
Ah, silly fool! Ah, self misunderstood;
How hath thine act thy sorrow multiplied?

Upon the fringe of an enchanted wood,
They call a halt, in the mid heat of day.
Before them is the broad Atlantic flood,
Behind the forest, stretching far away,
And green glades of the wild Broceliande,
Where leap the dun deer, and the bison stray.
Upon the summit of a knoll they stand,
There hollies glisten, and fair hawthorns bloom.
The surf, in thunder, on the rock-bound strand,
Doth toss the cloud up of its froth and spume,
Drenching the worn cliffs of grey Morbihan,

Whose fretted caverns are the sea-maid's room.
The wizard seer and the fay Vivian,
In unison, beneath one flowered tree,
Are set, and Ocean and its sails they scan,
And listen to the long monotony
Of the maned surges, as they shoreward sweep.
Move tiny dots around, on upland lea,
The speckled goat and ebon-visaged sheep.
Beyond them is the forest great and old,
Where stray the bison, and the dun deer leap.
Slumber did Merlin's weary limbs enfold,
For kindly day-sleep is the balm of age,
Lulled by the murmur of the wave, which rolled.
Vivian had learned his secret from the sage.
Awhile she waited, till his rest were sound,
Then took the staff of the great Archimage,
Wherewith she traced upon the measured ground,
About the sleeper, where he sleeping lay,
With motion of white feet a magic round.
'Sleep, Merlin, sleep, until the Judgment Day.
Dream, if thou wilt; but waken nevermore,
Till ended the Last Act of the World's Play,
And Twilight of the Gods earth, heaven, steal o'er.
Sleep through the winter frost, the summer heat,
Earing of spring, autumn with grain on floor,
And listen to the song the birds repeat,
And, in a dream, see the Great World go by,
Yet stir not, nor again thy fellows greet.'

Wrapped in his shaggy mantle, he doth lie.
He sleepeth on through the long night and day.
Within his circle it is warm and dry.
Dews nor rain wet him, nor the noontide ray
Doth overheat him, nor do night winds chill.
We mortal pass on our accustomed way.
We reck not of him, nor regard him still,
Folded in his blue cloak, beneath the tree,
That blossometh upon that Breton hill.
We cannot see him, but the wild things see,

The fox, the grey wolf, and the mountain bear,
But these have made him of their forest free.
The lordly stag is of his presence ware.
The woolly wearer of the fleece, mild-eyed,
The witless coney, and her cousin hare,
Feed near, but enter not that ring inside.
He sleepeth on, through the long day and night,
At sheep-shearing, at hour of orchard pride,
When shaws with blossom of the may are white,
And all the fields with crocuses abound,
When musical the lark in welkin height,
And pewit's plaint is heard on moorland ground,
When Philomel outpour her honeyed lay,
With cuckoo, cuckoo, when the vale resound;
When mowers mow, and farm-wives toss the hay,
And cider from the taps is running free,
When youths and maidens count their work as play,
And sweet the scent is of the shaven lea;
When Beltane fires upon each hill-top gleam,
When wilding roses blush on hedge-row tree,
And cattle shun the pasture for the stream;
'Ripe, cherry ripe,' when snooded lasses cry,
And strawberries are dipped in clouted cream;
When, ranged in store, the gathered apples lie,
And harvest sheaf is borne in triumph home,
When piled the winnowed corn in granary,
When sheep to cote, to byre when heifer come,
When woods are bare, when fields are white with rime,
And hunter's fingers with the cold are numb;
He sleepeth on, through the dull winter time,
Through every season of the turning sun,
Winter and summer, fall of leaf and prime,
While the twelve months, in sequent order, run.
Yet, in a vision, he doth inly ken
Ourselves, and all things, that our hands have done,
The march of armies, and the strifes of men,
The fall of empires, and the death of kings,
And fretteth to be pent in narrow pen.

No more the mover of our hidden springs,
To whom did princes and high lords obey,
His rod no more a new deliverance brings.
Now doth our greatness and our wealth decay.
Our skies are clouded, and our star doth wane.
Our glory passeth, as a dream, away.
We call upon him, but we call in vain.
His ear is open. His wit cannot aid.
More than a thousand men on battle-plain
Was Merlin's wisdom, more than spear or blade.
He sleepeth, where his cheek the breezes fan,
On Breton shore, beneath the thorn-tree shade.

How fareth it with the fay Vivian?
It did repent her much of her rash deed.
She would undo the mischief of the man,
But may not, nor the letter backward read.
Hence, dolorous, in lonely widowhood,
She mourneth, crape-veiled, and in sable weed.

Howel so swayed the harp-strings to his mood,
Now wild, now soft; but they gave pleaséd ear,
Until at greater height Orion stood.
Then pleasant in their eyes doth sleep appear.
Each man to other biddeth fair good night.
Each within chamber doth off dayworn gear.
These couch in fragrant linen, clean and white.
Sleep with his signet doth tired eyelid seal,
But open dreamland to the truer sight.
Yet what the vision purport to reveal,
One drop of Lethé, spilled into the brain,
Ere rosy dawn upon the blackness steal,
So blurreth all, we do but dream in vain.
But the stars darken, and the glorious sun
Doth jocund issue from his port again.
Man hath his labour with the day begun.
The mists float upward to the mountains hoar.
The subtle web the gossamer hath spun
Is hung with dewdrops, on the meadow floor.

Light summer cloudlets, in aerial blue,
Sweep, passing shadows, the broad champaign o'er.
The time is come to bid their host adieu.
The brethren arm, take horse, set forth on way,
Where honour call them and adventure new.

NOTES

CANTO I

1. *Line* 48 :

Caparisoned for war, and richly dight.

Sir Walter Scott, in the motto which he assigns to Marmion,

" Who checks at me to death is dight,"

would almost seem to have derived the word *dight* from the Latin *dictus*. If so, he was wrong. It is really the past tense and participle of an old verb of which the modern equivalent is *to deck*, and means *dressed, ornamented,* or sometimes no more than *prepared, ready.*

2. *Line* 107 :

To the fair tree, remeid of Adam's woe.

Remeid is an old English as well as Scotch form of the word *remedy.*

3. *Line* 129 :

The beast that questeth I pursue, the quest
King Pellinore once chased, but might not quell.

Both *quest* the noun and *to queste* the verb are derived from *quæsitum,* supine of the Latin verb *quæro,* which means *to seek.*

Quest the noun is too familiar to need explanation ; but *to queste* in the language of the chase was to make the noise that hounds make when on the scent of game.

The questing beast, which is also called the beast *glatisant* from the French term of similar meaning, hoofed like a hart, and with the head and neck of a serpent, and a body half-leopard, half-lion, may have had its origin in the giraffe, which was often exhibited in the Amphitheatre at Rome. If one were only sure that the baying of hounds formed part of the original description, one would be tempted to regard

this monster as a Celtic variant of the myth of Scylla. But Latin writers were laid under contribution, both by the monk and the minstrel, and this may only have been a later embellishment, consciously taken from a classical source.

Our first introduction to this strange beast is in *Morte d'Arthure*, vol. i. chap. xvii., where it is brought in somewhat abruptly. "The king saw the hart embushed, and his horse dead; he sat him down by a fountaine, and there he fel in great thoughts, and as he sat there alone, him thought he heard a noise of hounds to the number of thirtie. And with that the king saw comming toward him the strangest beast that ever he saw or heard tell of; so the beast went to the fountaine and dranke, and the noyse was in the beasts belly like unto the questyn of thirtie couple of hounds, but all the while that the beast dranke there was no noyse in the beasts belly, and therewith the beast departed with a great noyse, whereof the king had great mervaile, and so he was in great thought, and therwith he fel on sleepe. Right so there came a knight on foote to king Arthur, and said, 'Knight, full of thought and sleepy, tel me if thou sawest a strange beast passe this way?' 'Such one saw I,' said king Arthur unto the knight, 'that is past two miles. What would you with that beast?' said king Arthur. 'Sir, I have followed that beast long time, and have killed my horse, so would God I had another to follow my quest.' Right so came one with the kings horse, and when the knight saw the horse hee prayed the king to give him that horse, 'For I have followed this quest these twelve monethes, and either I shall acheave him or bleede of the best blood of my body.' King Pellinore that time followed the questing beast, and after his death sir Palomides followed it."

It is more fully described vol. ii. chap. liii.:

"This meane while there came sir Palomides the good knight following the questing beast, that had in shap a head like a serpents head and a body like a liberd, buttockes like a lyon, and footed like a hart, and in his body there was such a noyse as it had been the noyse of thirtie couple of hounds questing, and such a noyse that beast made where soever hee went. And this beast evermore sir Palomides followed, for it was called his quest."

King Pellinore of Mona, or Anglesey, was one of the most redoubted knights of the earlier part of the reign of king Arthur. He sided with Arthur in his wars, and in the war of the eleven kings slew king Lot in the battle of Castle Terrabyl. For this the sons of king Lot held him at feud, and sir Gawaine afterwards avenged his father's death upon him. Two of his sons, sir Lamoracke de Galis and sir Percival de Galis, were also very celebrated. Galis is simply

the Norman pronunciation of Wales. Sir Lamoracke, after a short but brilliant career, had been treacherously set upon and slain by sir Gawaine and his brothers, except sir Gareth, shortly before the period of this poem. This is alluded to in this canto (479 *and seq.*). Sir Percival was one of the three who achieved the quest of the Sangrail. A third but illegitimate son, sir Tor, was also a noted knight of the Round Table.

4. *Line* 163 :

> Ah, well is me ! to meet on Logrian ground
> The noble sir Palomides.

Logris, Loegr, or *Loegria* was the Cymrian appellation of that part of the island which was under Saxon domination. This was its meaning in Arthurian and post-Arthurian times, but the name itself is older. Compare the Pelasgian Locri. What its original meaning was who shall say ? If I may give a guess, I think it was the local appellation of that part of the island which was not included in Caledonia, Cambria, and Cornwall, *i.e.* the larger Cornwall, which also included Devon. For Cornwall seems always to have been a distinct unit, as is shown both by the legend of the Trojan Brute and his ally Corineus, and also by the tradition followed by Shakespeare in his *King Lear,* in which Cornwall is put on an apparent footing of equality with Albany or Gaelic Scotland.

5. *Line* 181 :

> When Lot and Urien rode, and great array
> Of the wild North, in Arthur's rising hour.

It was stated in the introduction that the war with king Lot was an occurrence of much earlier date than the period of our Arthur. To understand it we must go back to a very remote time. The earliest inhabitants of Britain were a Palæolithic race, cave-dwellers, a race of hunters and fishermen, contemporaneous with the reindeer and the cave-bear. Of these the Eskimos are probably the direct descendants. These passed away, and at a time when history had already begun in Egypt and the East, the whole of Western and Central Europe, including these islands, began to be occupied by two races of very different physiognomy and appearance—the small, swarth, sinewy, Iberian or Basque race, whose original home had been North Africa, and a tall, fair, Finnish race. Both these were Neolithic. It was this Iberian race which constructed Stonehenge and the other so-called Druidic monuments. The Druid worshipped in forests, not in temples made with hands, and these struc-

tures are found in places beyond the widest limit of the Druidic cult. According to the curious legend in *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, Stonehenge had been anciently transported by the giants from Africa to Ireland, and was removed to its present site by the art of Merlin. There is a double hint in this legend: first, that the race of men which reared Stonehenge had dwelt originally in Africa; and secondly, of the old Phœnician trade-route to Britain. This second point will be dealt with in note 8 to line 250.

The Finn has always been of a semi-amphibious nature. Inland he was the lake-dweller, by the sea he was the mariner, the pirate. From the Adriatic to the Bay of Biscay and the Baltic he has left his traces everywhere.

Then came the great Celtic invasion. This was twofold; first the Gael, afterwards the Cymry. The Gael seized upon and occupied the greater part of Gaul, but failed to dislodge the sturdy inhabitants of the district between the Garonne and the Pyrenees. A Finnish tribe, even to the days of Julius Cæsar, retained possession of the Armorican coast. The Gael also crossed into Britain, where they destroyed or absorbed the previous races of settlers, whose memory is preserved only by their graves of peculiar construction, their implements for war or the chase or domestic use contained in our museums, and the nursery histories of dwarfs and giants, and the exploits of Jack the giant-killer. But so persistent are race types that the small, dark, oblong-headed, Iberian type is still found side by side with the taller, fair-skinned, round-headed, Celtic type both in Wales and Ireland.

The Cymry followed, or they may have begun their western migration at the same time and tarried on the way. Here we come in sight of the landmarks of history. The Cimmerian homes in the neighbourhood of the Caucasus and the Crimea were broken up by a Scythian invasion in the long reign of Ardys the Lydian. Circiter 635 B.C. a vast Cimmerian horde swept like a devastating flood over the fields of Asia Minor and Syria, and oppressed the natives for three generations. Another vast body passed across the plains and through the forests of Central Europe, till they came to the cultivated lands of Gaul. Here they dispossessed their kinsmen of all that angle of the country which extends from the Rhine to the line of the Marne and Seine, but could not penetrate further. The expatriated Gael sought new possessions beyond the Alps, in the course of which they seized and burnt Rome 390 B.C. The Cymry of North-East Gaul became the Belgæ, who afterwards, however, received a considerable German intermixture. Other Cymry crossed the sea into Britain, where they pushed the Gael before them into Ireland, the Isle of Man, and the northern half of Britain.

The Brigantes, from the Humber to the Tyne, held their ground stubbornly to the east of the Pennine chain, but on the west the Cymry forced their way northward into Cumberland, and advanced yet further along the valley of the Nith into the lowlands of Ayrshire and lower Clydesdale. They built as their northern outpost the city of Alcluyd, which we now call Dumbarton. Their leader in these later successes seems to have been a great prince and conqueror called Arthur, who ought not to be confounded with his later namesake of West Wales, though since the time of Geoffrey of Monmouth, and probably even before that time, he has been so confounded. King Lot of Loudon, if he ever existed, and the name is a genuine Celtic name, was the antagonist of the first, not the second, Arthur, and Arthur's seat, near Edinburgh, is a memorial of this old forgotten war. Of the twelve battles with which Arthur is credited, that of Badon Hill only was a victory of the later Arthur: most, though not quite all, of the other eleven belong to this earlier war, and were fought, not against the Saxons, but the Gwyddyl Ffichti or Northern Picts. Loudon, of course, means the three Lothians, *i.e.* the modern counties of Linlithgow, Edinburgh, and Haddington. By the later romancers Lot is made king of Orkney; they seem to have found a geographical difficulty in locating him on the mainland. It is probably not a coincidence that the second Arthur bore the same name as the first. What more natural than that the name of a former mighty hero and conqueror of their race should be bestowed, for the sake of the omen, on a child of the royal house, born at a time of great stress and national danger?

Whatever may be thought of Lot, Urien was a real character, though not exactly contemporary with Arthur. He belonged rather to the preceding generation, and, while he lived, successfully defended his kingdom of Reged against the attacks of the Angles. But the Urien of romance, Urien the husband of Morgan-le-fay, is scarcely the Urien of history.

6. *Line* 185:

And wood and water echoed to the din.

"And then they fought together that the noise and sound rang by the water and the wood."—*Morte d'Arthure*, vol. i. chap. xiii.

7. *Line* 186:

And many died in dreadful battle stour.

Stour—*close combat, hard struggle*, connected with *stir*.

8. *Line* 250 :

Ship took I, and was borne o'er wind-tossed main,
There landed, where the sea-wave laps the hold,
Where Agusance, that Irish prince, doth reign.

Sir Palomides, in the *Morte d'Arthure*, is first met with in Ireland, whence he crosses to Cornwall, and proceeds thence to the Court of Arthur at Camelot. That is, he came into Britain by the old trade route, which tradition shows to have been continued, as an alternative way, even after the Roman conquest. So, too, in *Cymbeline*, Milford Haven is the port of embarkation and arrival. Even the army of Lucius come that way. From Cape Finisterre the Carthaginian mariners put out boldly into the open sea, observing the same parallel of longitude till they made the coast of Ireland, from which they stood westward for the mouth of the Bristol Channel. It is a mistake to suppose they frequented the south Cornish coast; their trading stations should be looked for on the north side of Cornwall or Devon or even in Somerset. By steering the course they did they avoided the dangerous navigation of the almost harbourless Biscayan shore, and, which was perhaps a still stronger reason, had a much better chance of eluding the pursuit of the piratical Veneti, whose fleet afterwards fought so stout a battle with the fleet of Julius Cæsar. This Phœnician trade-route explains the story of the Punic shipmaster, who, finding himself closely followed by a Roman trader, deliberately ran his ship aground to keep the carefully guarded route a secret. Had he been merely hugging the coast all the way, his self-sacrifice would have been absurd and useless. If the story is true, the most remarkable point about it is that Roman commercial enterprise should have been so far developed in times preceding the fall of Carthage. One would not have expected to have found a merchantman of Italy in the open Atlantic at a date so early.

9. *Line* 291 :

. . . Sir, Heaven thee sain
From such ill combat!

Sain—*to bless, keep safe.*

10. *Line* 361 :

Until, at Lonazep, it late befell.

Lonazep is probably a real place name, but I cannot locate it. According to the romancer it was in, or not far from, the country of Surluse, for the situation of which see the next note, at no great distance from the sea, within a day's ride of sir Launcelot's castle of Joyous-gard, and in the

vicinity of a great forest. The geography of the *Morte d'Arthure* is less imaginative than its history, and pictures to us, in a fairly accurate manner, the subdivisions and the local scenery of post-Roman Britain. Of course, there is some medieval colouring. The stockaded timber halls of patriarchal chieftains are magnified into moated castles, and the Roman villas, so plentifully spread about, are converted into fair manor-houses. Manor, by the way, the derivation of which has puzzled our lawyers, is simply the Welsh for stone-built house, the stone-built house in every parish.

11. *Line* 389 :

The spears of Scotland, Listenoise, Surluse.

In the story of Balin (*Morte d'Arthure*, vol. i. chaps. xxvi.-xliv.), Balin is told, after riding away from Camelot for about a week, that Listenoise is fifteen days' journey off. Listenoise, the land of mystery, the residence of Pellain, the maimed king, was the headquarters of the Sangrail. If its town and castle of Corbin, or Corbenek, be rightly identified with Corwen, it would be the county of Merioneth. Surluse, the country of Galahalt, the *haute king*, touched on the sea and was adjacent to North Wales. It would comprise the district extending from the Dee or Mersey to the Westmoreland and Cumbrian fells.

CANTO II

1. *Line* 233 :

Well built his cottage, roofed with thatch of reed ;
Nor rain, nor winter, he need, house-warm, fear.

Lest I may be thought in this, and other passages, to have lodged my hermit too comfortably, I will subjoin my original authority :

" For in those daies it was not the guise of hermites as it now is in these daies, for there were no hermites in those daies but that they had beene men of worship and of prowesse, and those hermites held great housholds, and refreshed people that were in distres."—*Morte d'Arthure*, vol. iii. chap. cxvii.

For in truth the prototype of the hermit of the *Morte d'Arthure* was not the Christian ascetic but the Druid priest.

2. *Line* 388 :

The lord allodial of the spade-delved ground.

Allodium is the freest of all tenures; or rather, it is not a tenure at all, for it is absolute ownership. Since the Norman Conquest there can be no allodial land in England. All is held ultimately of the king, who himself, however, holds it of God. This was the feudal theory, and is the theory of our Common Law.

CANTO III

1. *Line* 157:

Soon after, queenly Camelot shall fall.

The real site of Camelot, which Sir Thomas Malory, by an apparent confusion of the Saxon kingdom of Wessex with the ancient British kingdom of West Wales, erroneously identified with Winchester, is the hill called Cadbury Castle, a few miles from the market-town of Castle Cary in Somerset. An internal area, about two-thirds of the size of the enclosure of Silchester, is surrounded by outer lines of double earthworks. Both by nature and art it was a military position of considerable strength. The present name, Cadbury (Cathbyrig), means the hill of battle, but the name Camelot is preserved in two villages at the foot of the hill, Queen Camel and West Camel. The name is from Camelus, the war-god of the Britons. There is now no waterway, by which boats and barges could approach, and the sea is at some distance; but it must be remembered that Sedgemoor was once a tidal estuary, and that the salt waves, in Celtic times, rolled to the foot of Somerton and Langport. The level of the land stands higher there now than it did fourteen hundred years ago. Traditions of Arthur are still prevalent in the neighbourhood, but the country people are shy of giving them. Among other things, he plays there the *rôle* of the Wild Hunter. The period of Arthur, which was the period of the glory of Camelot, coincides very nearly with the third quarter of the sixth century. A.D. 552, Uther Pendragon fought his last battle in relief of Old Sarum. According to romance, he snatched a victory out of the jaws of defeat, but the graver authority of the *Saxon Chronicle* assigns the victory to Cynric.

"This year Cynric fought against the Britons at the place which is called Searo-byrig, and he put the Bretwalas to flight." Between this date and A.D. 577 the Saxon arms advanced in other directions, but made no progress on this side. It is tantalising that, while romance has been so prodigal of fictitious details, we know so little of the real history of Arthur. All we do know is, that he was king,

whether by legitimate succession, usurpation, or popular election, of West Wales, which meant broadly the counties of Somerset and Dorset; that he was chosen Pendragon of a confederacy which comprised Cornwall and South Wales and perhaps more; that he inflicted a severe defeat upon the Saxons at Badon Hill; that he took to wife Gwenhwyvar, or Guenever, said to have been a princess of Cameliard, apparently a district in South Wales; that she was abducted from him, with or without her own consent, but afterwards restored through the intervention of Gildas or some other eminent Churchman; that Medrawd, or Mordred, his nephew and foster-son, raised a rebellion against him; and that both nephew and uncle perished in the great battle of Camlan. All beyond is either inference or mere conjecture. But how comes it that the name of Arthur is so closely associated with Caerleon on the one side and with the Cornish or Damnonian kingdom—the two expressions are synonymous—on the other? The explanation is simple. Camelot was the caput of the *regnum*, but Caerleon of the *imperium*. It was the archiepiscopal centre of Wales and of the West, and there the confederated princes met and held their consultations. The Damnonian claim to Arthur rests on a misunderstanding. After the downfall of the kingdom properly called West Wales, when its memory had faded and only its name was left, that name was fastened in error on the surviving British kingdom in the West.

We do not even know for certain the parentage of Arthur, whether his father were Uther or Meiric ap Tewdrig or neither, nor yet who really was Guenever's abductor. Maelgwyn of Gwynedd (North Wales), the great dragon of the Isle of Dywyganwy, has been generally regarded as the original of Launcelot. But the "Life of S. Gildas," written probably between 1150 and 1200, gives quite another story. The compiler of this life has evidently misunderstood his authorities, in which the Latin *tyrannus* was the translation of the Celtic Pendragon. Arthur is tyrant in Cornwall and Devon, *rex rebellis* against his rightful overlord, Meluas, king in the *æstiva regio*, *i.e.* Somerset. But Meluas does him a great wrong. He carries off Arthur's wife, Guenever, to the island of Ynysvitrin, the older name of Glastonbury. Arthur, with a countless host of the men of Cornwall and Devon, besieges him there. Gildas persuades Meluas to give up Guenever, and reconciles the two kings.

With regard to the closing events of Arthur's reign, the following statement is as near the truth as we can get. The affair of Guenever, and the war which resulted from it, had broken up the confederacy. North Wales, if it had ever belonged to it, as for a time it seems to have done, seceded

at one end and Cornwall at the other. The religious question accentuated the difficulty. The Orthodox and the Pelagian or Neo-Druidic parties in the Church were bitterly hostile, and Mordred constituted himself the champion of the Neo-Druidic party. Backed by Cornish help, he rose in arms. Unless he is greatly belied, he even stooped to call in Saxon aid against his own countrymen. Tradition has it so, but tradition is not always a safe guide.

"Then sir Mordred raised much people about London, for they of Kent, Southsexe, and Southery, Essexe, and Suffolke, and of Norfolke, held the most part with sir Mordred; and many a noble knight drew unto sir Mordred and unto king Arthur; but they that loved sir Launcelot drew unto sir Mordred."—*Morte d'Arthure*, voi. iii. chap. clxvi.

Whether as allies of Mordred or fighting for their own hand, the Saxons were not idle.

"A.D. 577. This year Cuthwine and Ceawlin fought against the Britons, and they slew three kings—Comail, and Condidan, and Farinmail—at the place which is called Deorham, and took three cities from them, Gloucester, and Cirencester, and Bath-ceaster."—*Saxon Chronicle.*

Before this took place Arthur was probably already dead. He had fought two battles with Mordred, one on Barendoune, manifestly the Brendon Hills, and another at Camlan, which proved fatal to both. The memory and site of this last encounter are preserved in Slaughter Bridge, and the name of Camelford itself, which means the War-god's ford. Arthur, victorious at Brendon, had pushed Mordred to the south-west, until, with the sea behind him and the enemy before, he was forced to make a stand. If tradition may be relied on, this fight, so fatal to Britain, was fought on Trinity Monday. The dying Arthur was put on shipboard to be conveyed to Glastonbury. There can be no reasonable doubt that his body was buried there, though we need not believe in the invention of his tomb in 1191.

The victory of Deorham had opened the road to Camelot. Seven years later the end came.

"A.D. 584. This year Ceawlin and Cutha fought against the Britons at the place which is called Fethan-lea, and there was Cutha slain; and Ceawlin took many towns, and spoils innumerable; and wrathful, he thence returned to his own."—*Saxon Chronicle.*

In these terribly brief words the chronicler records the downfall of West Wales and the sweeping away of many ancient burghs and cities, such as the old British town on Ham Hill and that on Lambert's Castle, as well as Camelot. Of these, except of Camelot, the very names are lost. Some years ago, on digging in a field at the base of the hill called

Cadbury Castle, a long trench was opened, full of human bones, said, on examination, all to be of adult size, as though of slain men collected and buried after battle, or possibly of male prisoners of war led to the foot of the hill and there slaughtered in cold blood.

But why should Ceawlin return wrathful thence to his own? He had won a great victory, he had gained spoils innumerable, he had amply avenged his brother's death. What did he want more? The local history of Glastonbury throws some light on this. Custennin, or Constantine, the Cornish king, alarmed at the advance of the Saxons, had stepped in and checked their further progress. Till Cenwealh won the battle of the Pens, A.D. 658, Glastonbury was under the protection of, and attached to, the kingdom of Cornwall. In 601 a Cornish king, whose name William of Malmesbury was unable to decipher, but whom Dr. Guest conjectures to have been Gwrgan Varvtrwch, granted a charter to the church of Glastonbury, which even so sceptical an authority in matters of Celtic antiquity as the late Professor Freeman allows to be genuine. It is from this rescue of a part of Somerset from Saxon hands, that tradition, which is silent on the fall of Camelot, made Arthur name Constantine his successor.

2. *Line* 249:

On Beli's altar now some incense strew.

Beli or Belin, who is perhaps identical with the Phœnician Baal, was the sun-god of the Druidic cult. It was in his honour that the Beltane fires were lighted on St. John's eve.

3. *Line* 320:

Yet hear my vow. When battles seven be done,
I quit the falsehood of mine olden way.
Seven courses first, with spear and sword, I run,
Then cast mine old gods to the bat and mole,
And the true God and his Anointed Son
Thereafter worship, with pure heart and whole;
This service served, I, garmented in white,
At laver wash the plague-spot from my soul.

"Sir," said sir Palomides, "I will that yee all know that into this land I am come to be christined, and in my heart I am a Christian, and christined will I bee; but I have made such a vow that I may not be christined till that I have done seaven true battailes for Jesus sake, and then will I bee christined; and I trust God will take mine intent, for I meane truely."—*Morte d'Arthure*, vol. ii. chap. cxxxii.

4. *Line* 429 :

Upon his helm is set a panache fair.

The panache was a plume of feathers, generally but not invariably those of the peacock, set upright so as to form a crest. This was an adornment of the helmet in occasional use till the Wars of the Roses, when it began to be superseded by waving plumes.

5. *Line* 518 :

The mystic vision of the Holy Grail.

That death is the mother of life was a thought very near to the Druid mind. He saw this everywhere, in the spring-tide awakening of the world from winter sleep, in the holy thorn at Glastonbury, which blossomed at midwinter, and in the mysterious mistletoe, which was to him a symbol of the self-existent life. He allegorised the thought in the caldron of generation presided over by the Wood divinity, which made old things new and might be seen in the depth of the forest by the eye that was privileged to see. The Greek had a garbled version of this in the caldron of Medea. This is the primitive form of the Grail, traces of which are found wherever the Celt has set his foot, in the wilds of the Caucasus or in Germany as well as in his more recent Western home. But the parable grew. There was a round table of silver, or of gold, supported upon four pillars of silver (an image of the round earth itself) ; a dove (the spirit of life) bearing in her bill a golden censer, from which was diffused an odour of sweet spicery ; " And therewithal there was upon the table all manner of meates and drinkes that they could think upon." The sexual principle was indicated by a spear, whose point dropped gouts of blood, either held in a shadowy hand or resting on the table, and a full golden mazer or chalice carried by a fair young damosel—phallic symbols, which those who are learned in such subjects will easily understand ; for the rest the knowledge is not worth the explanation. But with the victory of Christianity these things took on a new meaning. The nature parable of physical reproduction became sublimated into a presentation of the divinest Christian mysteries. The dove with the censer was interpreted to be the Holy Spirit, the spear that dripped blood was the lance with which the Roman knight Longius, or Longinus, pierced the Sacred Heart upon the Cross ; the mazer or chalice became first the golden dish on which the Paschal lamb was served on Maundy Thursday and afterwards from a confusion between San Grail, San Graal, or San Greal and sang real, the cup used by the Saviour himself at the first communion. The God of the woods, the

Celtic equivalent to the great God Pan, was transformed into the likeness of S. Joseph of Arimathea. Why he out of all the saints in the Calendar ? Because Christianity in Britain was but skin-deep. Their own gods had failed to deliver them and they had lost faith in them, but the worthier and more patriotic Britons would not stoop to accept the gods of Rome. Just then there came to their ears the tidings of a new God, who claimed to be greater than, and was antagonistic to, Jove. Apparently even without the conqueror knowing it, the Druid seminaries at Ambresbury, Glastonbury, and elsewhere became Christian monasteries and colleges. But a faith adopted from political reasons rather than from conviction is seldom pure, and Christianity in Britain was largely mingled with Druidism. In the more Romanised towns the Orthodox party held their ground with some difficulty against Pelagianism, but in the rural districts, where the native chieftains dwelt with their *vaids* or bards and their retainers round them, the error went far beyond Pelagianism. Joseph of Arimathea was the warden of the Holy Sepulchre, where the dead Christ was laid and whence the living Christ arose. Whether the pupil of the Druids accepted the death and resurrection of Christ literally or no, he read into it the teaching of his own Sangrail, that out of death proceeds new life and the grave is the womb of birth.

But what was the quest of the Sangrail ? Simply an allegorical explication of the doctrine of metempsychosis, and of the re-absorption of the perfected human soul into the Divine Soul. The Druid position was this. Matter and soul are both eternal, and though from time to time the forms may vary, the quantity of each is fixed. All things that had an individual beginning must have an individual end ; the life of the human soul is longer than the life of one body ; but at last the time comes when it must be drawn again into the whole. Meanwhile the progress of the soul is gradually upward. Galahad the warrior, by his mystical union with the sangrail maiden, begets Galahad the soldier-priest. What is this but that the soul of the warrior at its next reincarnation becomes lodged in the body of a Druid. In the latest version of the story the first Galahad is Launcelot, the perfect earthly knight. But we are expressly told that Launcelot's name in childhood had been Galahad. The priest-knight Galahad has many enemies and fights many battles, but his enemies are not of this world, and in all his fighting he takes no human life. These adventures are professedly allegorical, and in the end he is borne with two companions in the enchanted ship, in which is conveyed the Sangrail, to the city of Sarras. Aboard that ship he sleeps

the sleep of death. " So long were they in the ship that they said unto Sir Galahad, ' Sir, in this bed ought yee to lye, for so saith the Scripture.' And then he laid him downe, and slept a great while, and when hee awaked hee looked afore him and saw the citie of Sarras." But what was this city of Sarras ? No more nor less than the great city of Tyre, the eastern extremity of the Druid world, the divine city, the threshold of the gods. Sarras is nearer to the sound of the original Phœnician place name than our Tyre is. But there is allegory upon allegory. Sarras ceases for awhile to be " the spirituall place," and becomes the great world city, Vanity Fair in short. The events which befell Sir Galahad and his fellows in Sarras strangely remind us of Christian and Faithful in " Vanity Fair." And if we add Hopeful we get a corresponding trio. The resemblance may not be altogether accidental. Bunyan may have read the *Morte d'Arthure* in his unregenerate days and taken a hint from it. The three fellows are cast into prison, where they are nourished by the San Grail. At the year's end the king dies, the three are released from prison, and Sir Galahad is made king. A year after, to the day, Sir Galahad " kneeled downe before the table, and made his praiers ; and then sodainly his soule departed unto Jesu Christ, and a great multitude of angels beare his soule up to heaven, that his two fellowes might behold it. Also his two fellowes saw come from heaven an hand, but they saw not the body, and then it came right to the vessell, and tooke it and the speare, and so beare it up to heaven. Sithence was there never no man so hardy for to say that hee had seene the sancgreall." This looks at first like the death of a Christian saint, but the story in its main features is older than Christianity. The prison is the prison of the flesh, but when the spirit prevails above the flesh the kingship of the man is seen, and for the soul that has attained to full perfection the trial of our earthly life is over. It loses its individuality and is taken up to be reunited with the Universal Soul. But why are the implements of the Sangrail also taken up ? Because for the illustrative example its work is done ; the alternations of death and life have for it no further meaning.

CANTO IV

1. *Line* 147 :

Sendal of loom of Taprobane her gown.

Taprobane was the classical name of the Island of Ceylon, which was the furthest point reached in ancient times by

vessels from the Red Sea. It became the mart of exchange between East and West, the produce of further India and China being brought thither in native bottoms. *Sendal*, of course, is silk.

2. *Line* 172 :

With feint, with awk stroke, and with whir of steel.

An *awk-stroke* meant a back-handed stroke, unexpected and therefore more difficult to guard against. Awkward in one of its meanings preserves this sense, *e.g. an awkward blow, an awkward customer.* The tyro's attempt at parrying such an attack has led to the ordinary modern meaning of the word.

3. *Line* 229 :

Of Galahalt's land, beside the salt-sea lake.

The country of Surluse. *See* Canto I. 389 and note thereto.

4. *Line* 284 :

They do not measure by terrestrial year,
But march and movement of the tardier sky,
Till rear be van, and van again be rear,
When gathered all the flock to pristine fold,
Sun, moon, and every star, and planet sphere,
Refill its station occupied of old,
And earth, in eld, her infancy renew,
Gilding our iron age with second gold.

The Great Year, or Sothic Period, was the contrivance by which the ancient Egyptians harmonised their conventional year of twelve months, each of thirty days, and five supernumerary days not counted into any month, with the true solar year, which, as Julius Cæsar did afterwards, they made to be 365 days 6 hours. Either the simple solution of an intercalary day every fourth year, adopted by the practical Roman, did not occur to them, or they were deterred by some religious scruple from tampering with the number of days that made up the year. Instead, they accumulated all these quarter-days, until at the end of $4 \times 365 = 1460$ years they had got a stock of days sufficient for a complete year, so that 1461 Egyptian years were, or would have been but for their slight over-estimate of the real length of the solar year, exactly equivalent to 1460 such years, and the new year's day would begin again with the sun and earth exactly in the same position. The true meaning of the Sothic Period was known to the priests. The laity or curious strangers who knew of its existence had no key to the inter-

pretation. To them it was the year of Heaven as opposed to the year of Earth. The Jew, with a bolder conception, but disregarding the fractional surplus, reckoned a thousand years to be a day of God. On this was based the curious fancy of the Great World Week of six working-days each of a thousand years followed by a millennium of Sabbath rest under Messianic rule. To support this theory, the chronology of the common text of Scripture has been wilfully or ignorantly shortened.

The Greeks and Romans had no national anticipations of a coming Messiah, but they had the legend of a past Golden Age, and this led them by another road to a conclusion not unlike. Astrology is the elder sister of Astronomy, and the astrologer had something more in view than merely to keep the year constant to the sun. To him the Magnus Annus was such a period as would elapse before all the heavenly bodies returned again to their first position. This was either the Sothic Period itself or some multiple of it. But if the stars do really exercise a necessary, uncontrollable influence on the lives of men—a large assumption, but one which astrology does not hesitate to make—it must needs follow that those born under exactly the same stellar conditions will be similarly circumstanced and will act in identically the same way. So the past history of the world will repeat itself again, when the Iron Age has reverted through the other ages in inverse order to the Age of Gold. This was the idea that Virgil had, more as a poet than a believer, in his Fourth Eclogue, which it used to be the fashion to regard as a Messianic prophecy, by virtue of which he had the honour of becoming Dante's guide through the circles of the Inferno. At the time when Virgil wrote, one Sothic Period was drawing to its close, and speculation was naturally rife among the learned.

Ultima Cumæi venit jam carminis ætas ;
Magnus ab integro sæclorum nascitur ordo,
Jam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna ;
Jam nova progenies cœlo demittitur alto.
Tu modo nascenti puero, quo ferrea primum
Desinat, ac toto surgat gens aurea mundo,
Casta fave Lucina : tuus jam regnat Apollo.
Teque adeo decus hoc ævi, te Consule, inibit
Pollio, et incipient Magni procedere Menses ;
Te duce, si qua manent sceleris vestigia nostri,
Irrita perpetuâ solvent formidine terras.
Ille deûm vitam accipiet divisque videbit
Permixtos heroas et ipse videbitur illis,
Pacatumque reget patriis virtutibus orbem.

At tibi prima, puer, nullo munuscula cultu
Errantes hederas passim cum bacchare tellus
Mixtaque ridenti colocassia fundet acantho.
Ipsæ lacte domum referent distenta capellæ
Ubera, nec magnos metuent armenta leones.
Ipsa tibi blandos fundent cunabula flores.
Occidet et serpens, et fallax herba veneni
Occidet; Assyrium vulgo nascetur amomum.
At simul heroum laudes et facta parentis
Jam legere et quæ sit poteris cognoscere virtus,
Molli paulatim flavescet campus aristâ,
Incultisque rubens pendebit sentibus uva,
Et duræ quercus sudabunt roscida mella.
Pauca tamen suberunt priscæ vestigia fraudis,
Quæ temptare Thetim ratibus, quæ cingere muris
Oppida, quæ jubeant telluri infindere sulcos.
Alter erit tum Tiphys, et altera quæ vehat Argo
Delectos heroas; erunt etiam altera bella,
Atque iterum ad Trojam magnus mittetur Achilles.
Hinc, ubi jam firmata virum te fecerit ætas,
Cedet et ipse mari vector, nec nautica pinus
Mutabit merces: Omnis feret omnia tellus.
Non rastros patietur humus, non vinea falcem;
Robustus quoque jam tauris juga solvet arator;
Nec varios discet mentiri lana colores,
Ipse sed in pratis aries jam suave rubenti
Murice, jam croceo mutabit vellera luto;
Sponte suâ sandyx pascentes vestiet agnos.
Talia sæcla suis dixerunt, currite, fusis
Concordes stabili fatorum numine Parcæ.

The meaning of these exquisite lines is that Time has run its course, and the generation now upon the point of birth will behold the dawn of the new Golden Age. But first there will be a new Heroic Age. The Ages of Hesiod are: First the Golden, then the Silver, then the Bronze, between which and the present or Iron Age is interpolated the Heroic Age. But in the order of reversion, by poetical foreshortening, both the Bronze Age and the Silver Age, which latter is the Hesiodic version of our Neolithic Age, are omitted. From the mention of Magni Menses it is apparent that the Cycle Virgil had in view was one of twelve Sothic Periods. Taking the common rough estimate of 1500 years for one such period, that would make the whole cycle to him one of 18,000 years.

Our own Shelley, in the beautiful Chorus which concludes his *Hellas*, has the same idea that the history of the world will repeat itself:

The world's great age begins anew,
The golden years return,
The Earth doth like a snake renew
Her winter weeds outworn:
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

A brighter Hellas rears its mountains
From waves serener far;
A new Peneus rolls its fountains
Against the morning star.
Where fairer Tempes bloom, there sleep
Young Cyclads on a sunnier deep.

A loftier Argo cleaves the main,
Fraught with a later prize;
Another Orpheus sings again,
And loves, and weeps, and dies.
A new Ulysses leaves once more
Calypso for his native shore.

O write no more the tale of Troy,
If earth Death's scroll must be!
Nor mix with Laian rage the joy
Which dawns upon the free:
Although a subtler Sphinx renew
Riddles of death Thebes never knew.

Another Athens shall arise,
And to remoter time
Bequeath, like sunset to the skies,
The splendour of its prime;
And leave, if nought so bright may live,
All earth can take or heaven can give.

Saturn and Love their long repose,
Shall burst, more bright and good
Than all who fell, than One who rose,
Than many unsubdued;
Not gold, not blood, their altar dowers,
But votive tears, and symbol flowers.

O cease! must hate and death return?
Cease! must men kill and die?
Cease! drain not to its dregs the urn
Of bitter prophecy.
The world is weary of the past,
O might it die or rest at last.

5. *Line* 387 :

No foot of seaman doth that plancheon tread.

Plancheon, *a floor* or *deck* of planking.

6. *Line* 440 :

And puissant spear of pleasant Valencie.

Valentia was the name given to that part of Roman Britain which lay between the two walls.

7. *Line* 529 :

She was not bred a neife upon thy land.

Neife, from Lat. *nativa. A bondwoman by birth.* The Fem. of *villein.*

8. *Line* 555 :

Art thou my lord, to whom I heriot owe ?

A heriot is a tribute due to the lord of the manor from the copyhold, and sometimes, though perhaps this is now extinguished, from the freehold tenant of a manor, on the death and more rarely on the alienation of the tenant. It is always a personal chattel, and usually the best live beast, but sometimes the best inanimate good, such as a jewel or a piece of plate. This is the theory, but usually there is a customary composition in money, which the tenant is bound to give and the lord to accept.

CANTO V

1. *Line* 130 :

Where the broad waters of the Pison rolled,
Which Paradise, the Mount of God, gush fro'.
Rich is the land with bdellium and with gold.

" And a river went out of Eden to water the garden ; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the first is Pison : that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good : there is bdellium and the onyx stone."—Gen. ii., 10–12.

2. *Line* 215 :

Where hidden the mysterious ark from sight.

There are many traces of the Sangrail myth in Ireland, and this legend of the hidden ark is probably connected with the

Grail. The Christianised version of the story is this. When Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, the ark somehow escaped destruction, and was conveyed by the prophet Jeremiah into Egypt. He did not die in Egypt as was commonly supposed, but migrated thence into Ireland, taking the ark of the covenant with him, which he buried in Ireland in a secret place. He also brought with him the Lia Phail, the Stone of Destiny, said to have been the one used by Jacob as his pillow. This stone, like the bricks in Cade's house, still exists to prove the story: it is the stone on which the Scottish kings were crowned, and which is now in the Coronation Chair at Westminster. Last, but not least, he led with him a princess of the Jewish royal house, Tea Tephi, the young and tender plant, who intermarried with the Crowned Horseman of Ireland.

3. *Line* 280:

> In haunt of woodlark he will fainer lie,
> Than listen to mouse cheep from wainscot side.

The reader will remember the saying of the good Lord James of Douglas, that he would sooner listen to the lark sing than to the mouse cheep.

4. *Line* 348:

> In solar chamber, upon upper floor.

Solar from *solarium*, a garret or upper chamber open to the sun. In very old houses the upper part usually projects beyond the lower. If we bear this in mind, we shall have no difficulty in understanding why the use of the term became restricted to an upper chamber.

5. *Line* 360:

> Not Wade himself against a host might stand.

In the northern mythology Wade was a mighty personage, though now, perhaps from the resemblance of his name to that of Woden, both his deeds and he, in this country at least, are almost passed into oblivion. The curious will find out all that is known about him in the *Wilkina Saga*, or in a very scarce pamphlet entitled, "Wade, Lettre à M. Henri Ternaux-Compans, par Fr. Michel, Paris, 1837." My excuse for bringing in his name is that he is actually mentioned in the *Morte d'Arthure*:

> For were thou as mightie as ever was Wade.
> —Vol. i. chap. cxxvi.

He is also alluded to in the Canterbury Tales:

They connen so moch craft on Wade's bote.

on which Speght has this note : " Concerning Wade and his bote, as also his strange exploits in the same, because the matter is long and fabulous, I passe it over." We must needs do the same ; it refers to some forgotten legend.

Camden, in his account of the North Riding, says thus : " Hard by, upon a steep Hill near the Sea (which yet is between two that are much higher) a Castle of Wada is said to have stood ; who (in that confused Anarchy of the Northumbrians, so fatal to the petty Princes) having combined with those that murder'd King Ethered, gave battel to King Ardulph at Whalley in Lancashire, but with such ill success that his Army was routed, and himself forced to fly. Afterwards, he fell into a Distemper which kill'd him, and was inter'd on a hill here between two solid Rocks about seven foot high ; which being at twelve foot distance from one another, occasions a current Opinion, that he was of a gyant-like stature."—*Camden's Britannia*, p. 907. Fol. Ed.

CANTO VI

1. *Line* 88 :

How to Cunobelin, the golden-crowned,
An eldritch carle, upon a Lammas day,
Came, bearing gifts to Verulam renowned.

The story of the Boy and the Magic Mantle and the wife of Sir Cradock is preserved in the ballad which comes first in the third series of the *Percy Reliques*. There is a more modern, but not an improved version of the same story in the third book of the same series. It belongs to the Arthurian cycle, though Malory omits it and substitutes instead the story of the Magic Horn at the Court of King Marke. Sir Cradock is really the great Caradoc or Caractacus. I have restored him, with his wife Tegan-Euvron, to their right position and time, and supposed the scene to take place at the Court of Cunobelin, his father. Cunobelin was the greatest of the British kings, and seems to have been the acknowledged overlord of all Cymrian Britain. He was the first British prince to coin money, and was a great road-maker. He is, of course, the Cymbeline of Shakespeare.

2. *Line* 91 :

A purfled mantle, hemmed with broidery gay.

Purfled, from the French *pourfiler*, worked with a trimming round the border.

3. *Line* 94 :

. . . The fair Palmyrene,

Zenobia.

4. *Line* 101 :

She, whom proud Reged and the North obey.

Cartismandua, Queen of Reged or the country of the Brigantes, viz., that district of which Caer-Ivrok, or York, was the centre, the land lying between the Humber and the Tyne. She afterwards betrayed Caractacus to the Romans.

5. *Line* 128 :

Let every dame and damosel be yare.

Yare, *quick, nimble, expeditious, ready.*

6. *Line* 381 :

How Balin and his brother Balan fell.

The names show that these were not mortal heroes, but mythological persons. Their whole story, though probably much altered from the original form, is contained in *Morte d'Arthure,* vol. i. chaps. xxvi.-xliv. It is perhaps the oldest of the *Morte d'Arthure* legends. One thing is noticeable : the names almost entirely lack the knightly prefix *Sir.* The adventures of Balin have a distinctive character of their own. He is never beaten, but in all his actions, save in the capture of king Ryence, no part of the original legend, there is always an undercurrent of ill-luck. Evidently the sun-god was not wholly a beneficent power. The beginning is picturesque. A damosel of the lady of the Isle of Avelyon comes, girded with a sword, which only the worthiest knight may draw. The king and all his nobles essay to do so, but in vain. Balin, poor and poorly arrayed and but just released from prison, draws it easily. The damosel tells him that with that sword he shall slay the best friend that he has and the man that he most loves in this world, and the sword shall be his destruction. What is the meaning of this ? Avilion is the sunset land, the scabbarded sword is the light hidden in darkness, the plucking it forth is the dawning of the day. When the light passes the day will close. So, too, when Balin slays the black-visaged felon knight, Garlon, who goes invisible, it only means that the rising sun has put an end to night. When Balin strikes the dolorous stroke, the world is in its winter death. In the final scene the knight with whom he fights the doubly fatal fight is armed in red, and his horse is trapped in red, the sunset hue ; and when he is dying the lady of the tower comes to him, " with foure knights and sixe ladyes, and sixe yeomen unto them."

The original meaning of yeomen was young men, and here it is used in that sense. The four knights are the four seasons, the six maidens and the six youths are the twelve months. These wait upon the passing year.

7. *Line* 385 :

'Twas in the year of Guenever made queen,
The lovely daughter of Leodgrance sere,
Who looked on Arthur, through the lattice screen,
When wroth he did his flame-hued Dragon rear,
And smote the leaguer of the host, which lay
'Fore Carohaise and filled men's hearts with fear.

In the *Morte d'Arthure* the legend of king Ryence is mixed up with and subordinated to that of Lot and the Northern war, with which in reality it had no connection. It is one of the stories that amused the childhood of the world. The proper date of it is Once upon a time. In its medieval form as fitted into the romance of Arthur it opens so :

" The meane while came a messenger hastely from king Ryence of Northwales, and he was king of all Ireland, and of many iles ; and this was his message, greeting wel king Arthur in this manner wise, saying that king Reyence had disconfited and overcomen eleaven kings, and everiche of them did him homage, and that was this, they gave him their beards cleane flayne of as much as there was ; wherefore the messenger came for king Arthurs beard, for king Rience had purfeled a mantell with kings beards, and there lacked for one place of the mantell, wherefore he sent for his beard, or else he would enter into his lands ' and brenn and sley, and never leave till he have thy head and thy beard.' ' Well,' said king Arthur, ' thou hast said thy message, which is the most vilainous and lewdest message that ever man heard sent to a king. Also thou mayest see my beard full young yet for to make a purfell of, but tell thou the king this. I owe him none homage, ne none of mine elders, but or it belong he shall doe to me homage on both his knees, or else he shall leese his head, by the faith of my body, for this is the most shamefulest message that ever I heard speak of ; I see well the king met never yet with a worshipful man, but tell him I will have his head without he doe homage unto me.' Then the messenger departed."—*Morte d'Arthure*, vol. i. chap. xxiv.

Ryence invaded Cameliard, the country of Leodgrance, Uther's old friend and companion in arms. Arthur hurried to the rescue, " and came within six dayes into the countrie of Camelyard, and there rescewed king Leodegraunce, and slewe there much people of king Ryence, unto the number

of ten thousand of men, and put him to flight. . . . And there had king Arthur the first sight of Guenever, daughter unto king Leodegraunce, and ever after he loved hir. And afterward they were wedded, as it shall be shewed hereafter." —*Morte d'Arthure*, vol. i. chap. xvi.

In the metrical romance of Merlin, Carohaise is said to be the chief city of Cameliard, or Carmelide, as it is there spelt.

8. *Line* 426 :

He doubly girded, with two swords on thigh.

" Then Balin and his brother tooke their leave of king Marke. ' First,' said the king, ' tel me your name.' ' Sir, said Balan, ' ye may see he beareth two swords, thereby ye may call him the knight with the two swords.' "—*Morte d'Arthure*, vol. i. chap. xxxiii.

9. *Line* 432 :

The lettered cross, the death mort's sounded call,
The hoary stranger, with his word of bode.

" And so he rode forth, and within three dayes he came by a crosse, and thereon was letters of gold written, that said : ' It is not for a knight alone to ride toward this castle.' Then saw he an old hore gentleman comming toward him, that said, ' Balin le Savage, thou passest thy bounds this way, therfore turne againe, and it will availe thee.' And he vanished away anone, and so he heard an horne blow, as it had beene the death of a beast. ' That blast,' said Balin, ' is blowen for me, for I am the prise, and yet am I not dead.' " —*Morte d'Arthure*, vol. i. chap. xlii.

10. *Line* 452 :

" Sir," to sir Balin said a knight of worth,
" Yon knight is dour, he mighty lance doth wield.
Thy speech doth show thee from the kindly North,
The kindly North, where I myself was born.
I prithee, go not to the combat forth
With wounded buckler. Thine is rent and torn,
So many hacks it hath. If to thy mind
Be mine, then take it to thy use this morn."

" ' Sir,' said a knight to Balin, ' me thinketh your shield is not good ; I wil lend you a bigger.' ' Thereof I pray you ' ; and so tooke the shield that was unknowen, and left his owne, and so rode unto the iland, and put him and his horse in a great boate ; and when he came on the other side, he met with a damosell, and shee said, ' O knight Balin, why have you left your owne sheild, alas ! ye have put your selfe in great

danger, for by your sheild you should have beene knowen ; it is great pittie of you as ever was of knight, for of prowesse and hardinesse thou hast no fellow living.' "—*Morte d'Arthure*, vol. i. chap. xlii.

CANTO VII

1. *Line* 27 :

Dubbed me, sir Ulfin, knight on battle plain.

Ulfin, or Ulfins, Lat. *Ulpinus*, was a knight of Uther's, and his confidant in the affair of Igrayne. He took the side of Arthur against the northern kings. It is the same name as the Scotch Elphin. Caxton, misled by the likeness of n and u, read the name wrongly as Ulfius, the Latinised form of the German Wulf or Wolf, except in one passage of the Romance of the Sangrail, where sir Ulfin appears as a hermit, in a locality not far from the supposed scene of the present poem. *Morte d'Arthure*, vol. iii. chap. lxxxii. This must be my excuse, if excuse is needed, for having identified him with the nameless hermit of our story.

2. *Line* 102 :

God showed by miracle in Uther's stead.

Girding with the sword was the outward and visible sign by which military leadership was conferred upon the Pendragon. Excalibur, the famous sword of Arthur, was his sword of Pendragonship. There are two varying legends of the way in which he achieved this sword. In order to understand the times aright, we must constantly bear in mind the existence of the two opposing parties in the Church and State—the Orthodox and the Neo-Druidic. Both had combined in raising Arthur to the supreme command. Merlin, who is less a person than a principle, is seen acting in concert with Bishop Brice, Dubrice, or Dubritius (Welsh, *Dyfrig*), the great Archbishop of Caerleon. Afterwards, when Arthur became established, he appears to have adhered to the Orthodox party, under the influence possibly of his own kinsman, Dewi, our S. David, who succeeded to the chair of Dubritius. Hence the discontent of some and the revolt of Mordred. This, I take it, is the inner meaning of the disappearance of Merlin and the life long hostility of Morgan-le-fay to her brother.

The Orthodox legend of the winning of Excalibur was as follows : The Archbishop, by Merlin's advice, called together all the princes and great men. As they were praying in the

church that God would send some miracle to show on whom their choice should fall, suddenly there was seen in the churchyard over against the high altar a great stone four square, like to a marble stone, and let into it an anvil of steel, a foot high, into which was stuck a fair sword naked by the point, with letters of gold around, to the purport that he who could pluck forth the sword was their appointed prince. Many tried, but none but the young Arthur could avail to pull it out. Some of the great chiefs were but ill pleased, but all the commons hailed him as their king and lord.

It must be confessed that the legend of the heterodox party, if not more marvellous, is more poetical:

"So they rode til they came to a lake, which was a faire water and a broade, and in the middes of the lake king Arthur was ware of an arme clothed in white samite, that held a faire sword in the hand. 'Lo,' said Merlin to the king, 'yonder is the sword that I spake of.' With that they saw a damosell going upon the lake. 'What damosell is that?' said the king. 'That is the lady of the lake,' said Merlin, 'and within that lake is a roch and therein is as faire a place as any is on earth, and richly beseene, and this damosell will come to you anone, and then speak faire to her that she will give you that sword.' Therewith came the damosell to king Arthur and saluted him, and he her againe. 'Damosel,' said the king, 'what sword is that which the arme holdeth yonder above the water? I would it were mine, for I have no sword.' 'Sir king,' said the damosell of the lake, 'that sword is mine, and if yee wil give me a gift when I aske it you, yee shal have it.' 'By my faith,' said king Arthur, 'I will give you any gift that you will aske or desire.' 'Well, said the damosell, 'goe ye into yonder barge, and rowe your selfe unto the sword, and take it and the scabbard with you, and I will aske my gift when I see my time.' So king Arthur and Merlin alighted, tyed their horses to two trees, and so they went into the barge. And when they came to the sword that the hand held, king Arthur tooke it up by the handles and tooke it with him; and the arme and the hand went under the water; and so came to the land and rode forth."—*Morte d'Arthure*, vol. i. chap. xxiii.

3. *Line* 330:

Save Taliesin, prince of minstrelsy.

The famous Taliesin was harper to Urien of Reged.

4. *Line* 332:

How Lot of Loudon and of Orkney fell.

"'As for me,' said king Lot, 'I would that every knight

would doe his part as I will doe mine.' And then they advanced their baners and smote together, and al to-shivered their spears; and king Arthurs knights, with the helpe of the knight with the two swords and his brother Balan, put king Lot and his hoast to the worst; but alway king Lot held him in the formost, and did great deedes of armes, for all his hoast was borne up by his hands, for he abode and withstood al knights. Alas! he might not ever endure, the which was great pittie that so worthy a knight as he was should be over-matched. . . . So there was a knight that was called the knight with the strange beast, and at that time his right name was Pellinore, which was a good man of prowesse, and he smote a mightie stroke at king Lot as he fought with his enemies, and he failed of his stroke, and smote the horse necke that he fell to the ground with king Lot, and therewith anone sir Pellinore smote him a great stroke through the helme, and hewed him to the browes. And then all the hoast of Orkeney fled for the death of king Lot, and there was slaine many a mothers sonne."—*Morte d'Arthure*, vol. i. chap. xxxv.

5. *Line* 364:

> Yet blood with blood sir Gawaine did requite,
> Who, man to man, encountered Pellinore,
> In the tenth year syne he was dubbed a knight.

"But king Pellinore bare the wit of the death of king Lot; wherefore sir Gawaine revenged the death of his father the tenth yeare after he was made knight, and slew King Pellinore with his owne hands."—*Morte d'Arthure*, vol. i. chap. xxxv.

CARMEN INAUGURALE

OR

INAUGURAL ODE

PREFACE

THE subject of this Ode is the Inaugural Banquet, with which we at Lyme Regis, more Anglico, celebrated, on the 21st January 1889, the reopening of our Guildhall, restored and rendered more worthy of the town, as a permanent record of our loyal respect for and love to Queen Victoria, on the completion of the fiftieth year of her reign. Mr. George Vialls was the architect employed. Inside the building is this inscription:

THE WORK WAS BEGUN A.D. 1887, HENRY HENLEY, MAYOR;
AND ENDED CHRISTMAS, 1888, ZACHARY EDWARDS, MAYOR.
IN COMMEMORATION OF
THE FIFTIETH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
QUEEN VICTORIA,
THIS TOWER WAS BUILT AND THE REST
OF THE GUILDHALL RECONSTRUCTED AND
IMPROVED, THE FABRIC AT THE COST OF
THE TOWN, THE FITTINGS OF THE COURT AT THE SOLE COST
OF THE REV. E. PEEK, OF POULETT HOUSE.

T. E. D. Philpot, Esq., of Holme Cleeve, Lyme Regis, also deserves mention, as having been a very liberal contributor; and the late William Pinney, Esq., formerly and for many years M.P. for the borough, when this borough was still entitled to return its Member, caused the arms

of the borough—arg., two bars wavy az., on a chief gu., a lion of England—to be carved, at his expense, above the doorway. Allusion is made to these three benefactors.

The Author is conscious that his lines do not always conform to the Horatian standard. He pleads in excuse, that Latin is not his native language, and that his Ode is longer than any in Horace. The longer the poem, the more liberties the poet may be allowed to take. If this plea is rejected, he asks for indulgence for what is after all but a mere *jeu d'esprit.*

CARMEN INAUGURALE

Gaudete, cives oppiduli mei.
Nunc est bibendum nunc epulis dies
  Advenit et cretâ notandus;
    Sit modus assiduo labori.

Curas avaras ponite, ponite;
Quæcunque restent forte negotia,
  Urbana privatæve sortis,
    Cras melius faciemus illa.

Nunc otiosos civibus expedit
Præstare sese. Desipere in loco
  Sit dulce, nec vino severam
    Tædeat explicuisse frontem.

Certé oppidanis semper habebitur
Lux illa felix; cœna Curulium
  Signabit hanc magnos in annos
    Lætitiam meritosque honores.

Quid, quid, moramur cedere tempori?
Cur non bibamus? num dapibus diem
  Speremus et risû jocisque
    Eloquioque paratiorem?

Cœnemus ergo, de solido die
Dempsisse fas sit partem aliquantulam ;
Potemus, intermissionem
Postulat hora brevem laboris.

Quæ prisca nobis consiliantibus
Ædes ruebat, deterior die,
Exstructa cum turri resurgit,
Altior et potior priore.

Conclave tignis triste labantibus,
Tectorium illud sordibus illitum,
Concessit huic querno lacunari
Æsculeæque trabi repôstum.

Sic aucta partim vestrâ ope publicé,
Partim benigno munere divitum
Concivium, instaurata tandem
Curia municipes recepit.

Causas patronus justior hîc agat,
Lites probandus dirimat arbiter,
Defendat accensus frequentes
Hinc pueros minitante virgâ.

Hoc oppidanis Judicium ac Forum
Dico futurum, et Concilium grave
Patrum, hîc Magistratus honesti
Jura dabunt metuenda pravis.

Posthinc Senatus parvulus oppido
Quæcunque prosint consulet aptius,
Hîc concionantes Curules,
Expedient meliora plebi.

Hîc tutiori jam tabulario
Scriptæ tabellæ nec pluvias sibi
Nec furta nec flammam extimescent,
Ordine dispositæ per arcas.

Hinc læti honores, hinc Prytanëiæ
Cœnæ parandæ, municipes mei,
Bacchusque Pomonæque dona
Non sine carne avium et bovinâ.

Claris virorum pro meritis suis
Grates agendæ, plaudite, plaudite !
Ad astra, tam cari sodales,
Clamor eat strepitusque longus.

Quisquis bonorum munificentior
Aulam vetustam hanc amplificaverit,
Hunc laude tollamus suâpte,
Hunc memori celebremus ore.

Promatur ergo largior amphora,
Cæcis latebris exsiliat rubens
Quæ si qua adhuc cellis avitis
Interiore notâ senescit.

Age, expeditus dic properet coquus,
Ne desit horæ, neve magiricæ
Sit artis expers, proh nefandum !
Tantaleæque dapis coactor.

At mensa nobis summa cacumina
Thulensis agri aut Cimmeriûm juga
Exæquet ornatu nivali
Alta Caledoniive Grampî,

Jam longiores ancipiti dies
Ducente Jano, non sine frigoris
Multo acriori vi geluque
Scribere amante vitro tabellas.

Afferte panem, ferte sales mihi
Puros, ministri, argenteus et nitor
Hîc adsit, hîc cultelli acuti
Cum patinisque suis patellæ.

Passo racemo curet amygdalum
Immisceat se, pomaque mitia
Apponat obsonator, addat
His liba parva nucesque fuscas.

Quis Phasianas mittet aves, agri
Silvæque dives? quis leporem dabit
Ternasve perdices (peritus
Aucupii) stipulas amantes?

Quis gallopavonem-meleagrida
Præbere vult? quis suggeret anserem?
Cui mansit in septis scolopax?
Quâ latitant anates palude?

Quis Durianos, quis sibi Bæticos
Exoptat haustus? quis magis imbui
De vite Rhenanâ, aut acetum
Ducere Burdigalensis uvæ?

Num quis potentis munera Liberi
Expressa temnit, num metuit sibi,
Gaudetque pocillis Sinarum? hanc
Do veniamque datam reposco.

Huic lympha puris fontibus exeat,
Seu malit arte, ut ferveat aëre,
Conversa, pro potu puellis
Commodior puerisque parvis.

Escas ferentes esurientibus,
Vos, o ministri, currite seduli,
Explete siccatos Iaccho
Hospitibus, famuli, culullos.

Rugosiores pellite poculis
Curas, amici, id tempora postulant,
Blandoque sermoni jocisque
Lætitiæque paratiora.

Duros labores cras ferat. Est bené!
Haec hora nostra est, postera cedito!
Quid sit futurum cras molesti
Negligere est sapientioris.

Primum sub annum festus habebitur
Usque oppidanis hic quoties, puto,
Illuxerit terris dierum
Munditiis epuli dapumque.

Jam præbeatis comiter, optimi,
Aures loquenti, si quid ineptius
Ex ore lapsum, ne maligno
Ludibrio fuerit, sodales.

Gaudete vero, municipes mei,
Præbete et aures justa loquentibus,
Hâc lege convivis bibendum
Dicimus et totidem culullis.

Regina, primó, magna Britanniæ,
Tuæ saluti pocula singula
Libamus, Indorum Imperatrix,
Mille potens maris insularum.

Regnata Poro Cæsaris obtines,
Et læto oryzâ messe Palimbothram,
Candentis et lucos Imai
Tigriferos Salicenque eburnam.

Ignota regnas per loca notaque
Orto ab Philippo, te dominam Occidens,
Teque Auster, et partes Eoæ
Aspiciunt eadem volentes.

Bis quinque cum te tum populum tuum
Laté beârunt lustra tyrannida,
Cum prole præclarâ nepotum,
Te coluere Fides Amorque,

Te prosequuntur Justitia et Pudor,
Humaniores sunt popularium,
  Suadente te, mores tuorum
    Obsequio facili pioque,

Sævo ab tumultu Martis et impii
Telis abhorres, diligis otia
  Pacisque tranquillos labores
    Balmoralensis et alta saltûs.

Victoriale hinc expetimus Deum
Regnum in nepotes sæclaque in altera
  Per lustra producat benignus,
    Sic fore perpetuum Britannis.

Has res precamur. Quas utinam velit
Cœlestis Auctor! stantibus, ut solet,
  O contubernales, canendum,
    "Salva Siet, Deus, Illa Nostra."

Quos provocamus, cara sodalitas?
Qui sunt bibendi, quot cyathis viri?
  Bacchemur, o dulces amici!
    Postulat hora brevem furorem.

Cedamus horæ, postera cedito!
Dent largiores hi mihi cantharos,
  Gaudere fas est, erubenti
    Fas pepulisse mero dolores.

Libanda sunt hæc altera Principi
Cambrûm salutis pocula gratiâ,
  Ipsique Alexandræque, caro
    Conjugio, tenerisque natis.

Et regiorum sint ea pocula
Fratrum ac sororum, præsidii additi
  Regnisque maternæque genti,
    Imperio auxilii futuro.

Mater decorâ clara propagine,
Claris propago nata parentibus,
Num te beatiorem an illos
Lætitiâve pari vocemus!

Et stirpe regum firma Britannia,
Quam se tuorum semine principum
Nitente virtutes ad omnes,
Res bené habet tibi, res habebit!

Lætamur ergo. Pocula Principi
Cambrûm virorum, pocula fratribus
Libate, "Sint salvi," rogantes
Numen, "et incolumes in ævum."

Quos provocamus pocula ad integra?
Dulces amici, queis calices damus,
Laudemque Nysæosque honores,
Cum strepitu geminisque palmis?

Nam feriatos civibus expedit
Præstare sese: crebrius, ocius,
Dent pocla succincti ministri,
Non hodié sitietur ullis.

Has mentis ægras in Mare Atlanticum
Tradamus Euro sollicitudines
Portare, circum sic strepenti;
Desipere est sapientis olim.

Gaudere fas est, o comites mei,
Vino et lucernis tempus eget vigil:
O combibentes, gaudeamus,
Sol sitiens bibit ipse rores.

A mane rores sol sitiens bibit,
Dulcesque rivos jam medius poli,
Magnos et amnes et marinas
Haurit aquas rutilante vultu.

Haud immerentem propter Episcopum
Propterque clerum tertia provoco
  Ad vina vos mecum bibentes,—
    Pontificem gravitate mirâ !

Spectatâ et ipsum denique et ordinem
Virtute totum, sed mihi cæteris
  Excellit hîc noster, sacerdos
    Ille hominumque Deique cordi.

Castus, modestus, quem proba sanctitas,
Quem cultus ornat non mediocriter
  Urbanus, inter clericales
    Clericus hic pietate præstat.

Mortalibus sic vivitur optimé,
Si rité reddant quæ sua Cæsari,
  Si sponte cedant quæ Dei sint
    Huic tribuenda magis verendo.

Quaré colamus, nempe Deus dedit
Ipsasque vites dulciaque omnia,
  Largitus humanos ad usus,
    Hunc dape vel mediâ colamus.

Huic serviendum est. Huic quoque deditos
Ejus secundis dignor honoribus,
  Legata qui ferrent sacratos
    Cælicolæ Dominoque regum.

Ipse hoc Sarensi lætus Episcopo
Totique clero, nomine et ipsius
  Quam maximé huic nostro propino
    Moribus ingenioque notis.

Cives, eundem tollite laudibus,
Si vir probandus visus erit modó,
  Vir diligendus, excolendus,
    Clamor eat strepitusque ad astra.

Gaudere fas est, gaudeat oppidum !
Fas otiosis civibus imbui,
  Hâc luce tam festâ, Lyæo
    Liberiore cadisque plenis.

Succos amœnus flos violæ bibit,
Exsiccat imbres purpurea et rosa,
  Pratensis e cœlo madescit
    Herba, salix madet ebriosa.

Potemus ipsi. Si qua negotia
Infecta restent, cras ea viderit,
  Tam pulchra plané nox requirit
    Vina, nuces, vigiles lucernas.

Sit quartus hic pro militibus scyphus,
Semper secundo Marte ferocibus,
  Nautisque vexillariisque
    Subsidioque volentium arma,

Terras per omnes, per maria omnia,
Tot assecutis præmia bellicæ
  Virtutis illis, hoc domorum
    Tecta focosque suos tuente.

Libemus ergo militibus scyphos ;
Libemus ergo pocula classicis,
  Hi nonne propugnaclo aheno
    Sunt Lacedæmoniisque muris ?

Miror paratum pro patrio Lare
Extrema nobis subsidiarium
  Audere civilesque turmas
    Ultima et arma decusque tutum.

Libemus ergo pocla cohortibus
Domesticis, nec bella volentibus,
  Sed salva Reginæ suisque
    Cuncta domi stabilemque Pacem.

Tutamen illud laudibus æmulis,
Vos, o Coloni, tollite, vos mero,
Quis justa cœnarum his recuset,
Invidus, en calices ad imos ?

Gaudere fas est civibus omnibus,
Gaudere fas est omnibus advenis,
Cedatur horæ, poscit hora
Vina, sales hilaresque risus.

Nam pota tellus imbribus e novis
Æstiva ridet, potaque Cynthia
Titanis ex igni renidet,
Læta per ætherias viarum.

Queis jam parentur debita pocula ?
Queis jam loquelæ ? jure Curulium
Sint illa et ipsius Magistri
Conciliique gravis Senatûs.

Sit pro salute hoc municipalibus
Cunctis, eorum sit quoque filiis,
Uxoribus sit, filiabus,
Cuique, quibuslibet, universis !

Situ locorum, temperie Jovis
Æquâ, quis arces dicere habet mihi
Salubriores, gratiores,
Hâc positâ super æquor arce,

Quæ primâ ab orâ scandit in altius,
Paulum reducta et collibus ardua,
Angustiis priscis viarum
Et placidâ celebris quiete ?

Hâc unda laté cærula Gallici
Æstûs relucet velivolum et mare,
Hâc Portus ad Solem Occidentem
Accipit exiguus carinas

Heu ! pauciores usque nec amphorûm
Tot millium, rem sic minuit dies,
  Fortuna tantillum lucelli
    Invidet his hodie Colonis,

Mutata vultum ! Mobilis, aspera,
Odit priores, semper amat novos,
  Quam magna regna tam misellas
    Auget et extenuat tabernas.

Ex urbe vicum reddit et invicem
E viculo urbem : sed quid enim moror ?
  Donârat olim, quæ resumpsit,
    Fors propriæ ditionis illa.

Nobis reliquit, scilicet haud sua,
Æquam secundi temperiem Jovis
  Situsque jucundos locorum,
    Aëre molli et aquâ salubri.

Horto frequenti scandit in altius
Acclive crebris ædibus oppidum,
  Villisque villulisque lautum,
    Fronde placens nemorosâ et umbrâ.

A fronte lucent hæc freta Gallica,
Hâc ridet æquor, prospicitur mari
  Laté, sed illâ vim refringit
    Mons hiemum et Boreale frigus.

Heroes olim Plantagenistidæ
Permulta nostris regia Regiis
  Cessere, nostros valdé amatos
    Ante alios coluere cives.

Hîc flexuosus non sine murmure
Rivus pererrat prata virentia,
  Est callis impendente rupe
    Devius, est coryletum opacum.

Dulces latebræ, Durotrigum decus !
Quis lætiores dicere habet mihi
Arces beatis his recurvas
Arcibus appositis ad undas ?

Libetur ergo nobile poculum
Ipsi Magistro, pocla Curulibus
Libentur et parvo Senatû ;
Plaudite, si meruêre plausus.

Sit pro salute hoc civibus omnibus,
Sit pro salute hoc et pueris suis,
Uxoribus sit, sit puellis,
Cuique, quibuslibet, universis !

Vos, o Coloni Regii, et advenæ,
Majora vos ad pocula provoco,
His quot quot externi virorum aut
Municipes epulis adestis.

Curas morantes, sollicitos metus,
Hesterna dura et crastina pellite,
Quid sit futurum cras molesti
Seu dubii bene negligentes.

Hibernicam rem mittite turbidam,
Et quæstiones, cujus epistola
Auctoris, an sit ficta necne,
Cedite Judiciis trahendas.

Germanicus vir quid faciat nimis,
Ut mos, superbé, turbave Gallica
Quid peccet, hoc sit præcavendum
Concilio magis Optimatum.

Gaudere fas est, o comites mei,
Potare fas est ; dent citius nova
Hi pocla, quænam vos, scelesti,
Tam mora tarda tenet, ministri ?

Quos deinde largi Liberi honoribus
Ornemus apté, quos simul haustibus ?
Hos oppidanorum profecto,
Quorum opibus Domus hæc Curulis

Humo resurgit pulchrior, amplior,
Pictis tigillis et trabe querceâ,
Lato lacunari decora
Æsculeoque epimedione.

Alter refecit sumptibus ipsius,
Ultro refecit, non loquor insciis,
Hæc obsoletæ, jam caducæ,
Interiora Domûs et auxit,

In majus auxit, dives opum satis,
Summo suorum divitior tamen,
Ædilis haud unius anni,
Fit studio precibusque gratis.

Largitus alter grande pecuniæ,
Nummis levavit municipes suis,
Cæcisque clam donis fefellit,
Quod solet, ingenuâque fraude.

His, o sodales, pro meritis suis
Grates agantur, profluat his liquor
Lenæus e magnis lagenis,
Exoriatur ad astra clamor.

Dignæ viritim pro merito suo
Grates agantur, sunt meriti optimé,
Utrique sint grates agendæ
Poclaque plena suæque laudes.

Et tertium illud nominibus virûm
Binis honesté consociabitur,
Quippe ejus in Magnum Senatum
Vocibus auxilioque, cives,

Vestro refecti crebrius antea,
Nondum usitato jure diutius
Et prærogativâ hâc ademptâ
Centuriæ minimé frequenti.

Nam dignus est, cum multa aliás bené
Persæpe nostris fecit egentibus,
Tum curat e saxo secandum
In foribus clypei decorum

Insigne, prisci munera Regiis
Concessa Regis : respicit hâc Leo
Auratus Anglorum, bis infra
Cærulea unda nivesque ternæ.

Ergo bibamus Thrëicio modo,
Potemus ergo Saxonum amystide,
Cantemus illud, " Quod benigni
Sunt homines, ita quisque nostrûm

Consentit, id si quis negat improbé
Mentitur ; hic et tela ferentibus
Terrâ marique, hic et togatis
Mos erat, illa solemus ipsi."

Ter est bibendum municipalibus,
Posco ministros integra pocula ;
Debentur haustus largiores,
Des, puer, ore tenus superque.

Grates agantur pro meritis virûm
Dignæque laudes. Ter feriat polum
Sublatus, o dulces amici,
Clamor ad hoc crepitante plausu.

Gaudete, cives municipî mei,
Præbete et aures justa loquentibus,
Favete linguis, tum locuto,
Quæ decuit, manibus favete.

Quos deinde plenis Evii honoribus
Ornemus apté, more patrum pio?
  Istos Magistratus priores
    Et nova Concilia hæc Britannis.

Nam nôstis illos, nôstis et integros
Et diligentes, hæc adeó nova
  Sperare debemus futura
    Talia et ipsa parique curâ.

Et namque nôstis præcipue virum,
Huic oppidano plaudite clarius,
  His more Græcorum bibatur
    Et juveni haud modicé colendo.

Insaniendum est civibus omnibus
Totique pago, liberius nova
  Dent pocla succincti ministri;
    Clamor eat strepitusque ad astra.

Dent largiores hi mihi cantharos,
Ut more Thracum et Saxonum amystide
  Potare possimus vocati,
    Nox ea vult vigilesque lychni.

At queis parentur grata potissimum
Vox eloquentis vinaque debita?
  Queis exterorum civiumve
    Sit sua laus tribuenda facti?

Quis posset autem ferre silentio
Oblivioso nomina turpiter
  Tradenda, saltem hoc Architecti
    Ipsius, ista fabrûm, novata

Per quos domorum tecta Curulium
Hæc exstiterunt, multâ operâ suâ,
  Sudore multo, et robur illud
    Tuta fides positis tabellis?

Addantur ergo, pocula maxima,
Ipsi Architecto pocula maxima ;
  Vir diligens est, diligendus
    Arte bonâ et studiis amicis.

Et cuique fabrûm digna merentium
Accedat humor Bacchicus, ut simul
  Sublatus his plausus profundi
    Signa adeat taciturna cœli.

Te feriatam, parva Colonia,
Præstare debes, eripe te moræ ;
  Quis cantilenas aut jocosa
    Haud alienus habet Camœnæ ?

Vino et lucernis tempus eget vigil,
Tam pulchra plané cantibus hora eget,
  O combibentes combibamus,
    Fas superâsse mero labores.

Dulces amici, queis nova dolia
Siccentur apté civium an hospitum,
  Blandique sermones parentur
    Et furibundus ad astra clamor ?

Illud Lyæi, parvula civitas,
Do nominatim comiter advenis,
  Salvere certatim jubentes
    Finitimos hominum colamus.

His usitato more epulantium
Libans propino, sic decet, Evium,
  Hos laude, cives, efferatis
    Eximiâ egregioque potu.

Queis e lagenis dein rubor emicet ?
Quas excolamus rectius haustibus ?
  Sint feminarum, sint puellæ
    Cuique suæ propriæve nuptæ.

Castâ puellâ quid melius dedit,
Sponsâ fideli quid melius dedit,
  Primis ab annis, orbe toto,
    Quid simile, Omnipotens habendum ?

Hæc, vina libet quisque suæ, bonus
Seu sit maritus, seu procus impiger,
  Hæc si quis ignotos amores
    Spernit adhuc Veneri futuræ.

Queis, o sodales, alloquia et manus,
Et comparentur magna ciboria ?
  Qui provocandi sunt ad haustus
    Inde novos ? quibus astra clamor

Aurata et altum ter feriat polum
Vesanus, ut mos, ut jubet arbiter
  Delectus et rector bibendi,
    Juraque nota dapesque plenæ ?

Curate, quæso, pocla carentium
Baccho, ministri, fundite largius,
  Nam multa nox est, mox iniquos
    Crastina lux referet labores.

Jam multa nox est, fundite largius,
Explete Baccho pocla carentibus ;
  Potemus, epotemus illud,
    Est opus, est, citiore vino.

Græco bibantur more Notarii,
Prelum bibatur, scilicet Imperî
  Pars quarta, et Actorum Diurna,
    Nec minus Hebdomadalis illa

Scriptura nobis cuncta per oppida,
Cunctas per urbes, præsidium reis
  Insigne, Rerum publicarum
    Alma salus, monitorque regum ;

Frenum tyrannis vana frementibus,
Legum bonarum quam tabularius,
Tam suasor interdum, nec idem
Segnis, inops, levis, indisertus.

Quantum benigno sæpe Notario
Debemus omnes! quicquid ineptius
Fortasse, seu balbé, quis olim
Dixerit, insolitus loquendi,

Pransis, Diurna id mane legentibus
Vult clara vox et lucidus ordine
Exire sermo Tulliani
Rhetoris arte typographorum.

Tantâ æstimandus laude Notarius,
Prelumque tantâ laude, vel Imperî
Pars quarta, ut aiunt, o sodales
Et socii pariter bibentes.

Cessum sat horæ. Lusimus, hospites,
Id quod decebat; pocula duximus,
Quot nos oportebat nec ultra
Fas hilari madidos Lyæo.

Id restat unum, quod solet ultimum:
Cauponis hæc sint vina novissina,
Copæque cauponis maritæ;
Quos meruêre ferant honores.

Cessum sat horæ. Lusimus, edimus,
Sat, o sodales, hausimus Evii
Gaudentis in lucem micare,
Recté hilares, minimé ebriosi.

Recté madentem diligimus bené,
At temulentos odimus improbos,
Mos ille nobis barbarorum
Displicet et subito ira fletu.

Ne rixa turbet gaudia fœdior,
Ne pes vacillet, ne trepidet manus.
Hîc ordinatis sit, monebo,
Terminus atque modus culullis.

Jam sera nox et signa cadentia
Ducunt sopores, strata placent tori,
Abite dormitum, domus et
Vos placidæ excipiant quietes.

At Phœbus hunc quum rettulerit diem
Vertente Jano, municipes mei,
Tam jure festum, tam lucernis
Eloquioque facetiisque

Aptumque cœnis, more Britannico
Magnos in annos hoc iterabitur,
Pomona cum Baccho redibit,
Et cumulata Ceres canistris.

Pingui ferinâ mensa gemet feré
Ut nunc onusta, et carne avium et boum,
Linique et argenti nitore;
Tum quoque delicias agemus.

Curâsse fas sit corpora Libero
Coctis et escis; sit dapibus locus,
Sacroque solenni futuro
Civibus atque Sodalitati.

Nam factus est, vos credite posteri!
Jacobus olim quidam operosior,
Ludoque rarus feriisque,
Tardus, iners, hebeti Minervâ.

Tunc, o Curules, post Genio mero
Læti quotannis rité placebimus.
Nec dicta nobis invenusté
Sint ea, nec medicis molesta.

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